

A MIDSUMMER
NIGHT'S DREAM



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THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

General Editor, C. H. HERFORD, Litt.D., University of Manchester

A
MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S
DREAM

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THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

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GENERAL PREFACE

IN this edition of SHAKESPEARE an attempt is made to present the greater plays of the dramatist in their literary aspect, and not merely as material for the study of philology or grammar. Criticism purely verbal and textual has only been included to such an extent as may serve to help the student in the appreciation of the essential poetry. Questions of date and literary history have been fully dealt with in the Introductions, but the larger space has been devoted to the interpretative rather than the matter-of-fact order of scholarship. Æsthetic judgments are never final, but the Editors have attempted to suggest points of view from which the analysis of dramatic motive and dramatic character may be profitably undertaken. In the Notes likewise, while it is hoped that all unfamiliar expressions and allusions have been adequately explained, yet it has been thought even more important to consider the dramatic value of each scene, and the part which it plays in relation to the whole. These general principles are common to the whole series; in detail each Editor is alone responsible for the play or plays that have been intrusted to him.

Every volume of the series has been provided with a Glossary, an Essay upon Metre, and an Index; and Appendices have been added upon points of special interest which could not conveniently be treated in the Introduction or the Notes. The text is based by the several Editors on that of the *Globe* edition.

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INTRODUCTION

1. LITERARY HISTORY OF THE PLAY

The Registers of the Company of Stationers for the year 1600 contain, among other entries of books licensed, the following:

8. Octobris

Thomas flysher Entred for his copie vnder the handes of master Rodes and the Wardens. A booke called *A mydsommer nightes Dreame* vj^d.

Two editions of the play in Quarto form bear the date 1600. One of these, known as the First Quarto (Q 1), has the following title-page:

“[Ornament] | A | Midsommer nights | dreame. | As it hath
beene sundry times pub- | *lickely acted, by the Right honoura-*
| ble, the Lord Chamberlaine his | *seruants.* | *Written by William*
Shakespeare. | [Fisher’s device: a kingfisher] | ¶ Imprinted at
London, for *Thomas Fisher*, and are to | be sould at his shoppe,
at the Signe of the White Hart, | in *Fleetestreete.* 1600.”

This is often called Fisher’s Quarto.

The Second Quarto (Q 2) or Roberts’s Quarto, as it is called, is a reprint, page for page, of Q 1. The typographical details are better arranged, the spelling is less archaic, a few misprints are corrected, and more errors have been allowed to creep in. The title-page runs as follows:

“[Ornament] | A | Midsommer nights | dreame. | As it hath
beene sundry times pub- | *likely acted, by the Right Honoura-*
| ble, the Lord Chamberlaine his | *seruants.* | *Written by William*
Shakespeare. | [Roberts’s device: the Geneva Arms: a Half-
Eagle and a Key.] | *Printed by Iames Roberts, 1600.*”

The old view that Roberts’s edition was pirated has been shown to be correct; but it was not printed in 1600. Mr. A. W. Pollard has proved that a group of editions of plays, nine in all, of which

it was one, was really printed in 1619.¹ The play next appeared in the great collection of all Shakespeare's plays, known as the First Folio (F 1) of 1623. The version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* there given appears to have been printed from a copy of Q 2 kept for use in the library of the theatre. This is shown by the more numerous and elaborate stage directions which it contains.² The text of the First Folio was reproduced in the Second, Third, and Fourth Folios of 1632 (F 2), 1664 (F 3), and 1685 (F 4).

The text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has come down to us in a singularly perfect state. This is probably because the First Quarto was printed from a clear and authentic manuscript. The slight variations introduced from time to time in the later editions do not appear to rest upon any independent authority. When they are not mere mistakes, they are only conjectural emendations. Sometimes, of course, they happily correct a slip in the First Quarto.

The date of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has given rise to more than the usual amount of vain imaginings. The only precise external indication which we have to go upon is the mention of the play in the list of Shakespeare's comedies given in Francis Meres's *Palladis Tamia*, which was entered in the Stationers' Register, September 7, 1598. Later than 1598, therefore, it cannot be, but in attempting to fix the date more exactly, we must depend upon internal evidence. Several passages in the text have been held by one critic or another to contain some contemporary allusion which might yield such evidence. Most of them will not bear serious discussion;³ but there are two which seem trustworthy and which point to 1594-95 as the probable date of composition.

1. The description of the weather in ii. 1. 81-117. The passage refers to a totally abnormal year, in which besides terrible rains and destructive floods, summer is like winter and winter like summer, and all the seasons have changed character (ll. 107-114). Not merely does Shakespeare's description agree in essentials with the four contemporary accounts quoted in appendix B; but no other year in Stow's *Annals* between 1590 and 1600 answers to these descriptions. Moreover, Shakespeare's description is unnecessary, stops the action, and is quite out of harmony with the rest of the play. In such a season, the lovers would not have met

¹ *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos*, 1909, Chapter iv; see also *Modern Philology*, viii, 145-163.

² See the notes on iii. 2. 415, 418, 463; v. 1. 127.

³ See notes on ii. 1. 2-3; ii. 1. 15; v. 1. 9; and v. 1. 52-53.

in the wood, or have used the excuse of Maying, the actors would not have chosen the open air for their rehearsal, nor would Theseus have taken his bride Maying and hunting. The passage is obviously dragged in, and the most reasonable explanation of its presence is the interest it would have for audiences who had just passed through such experiences as it described.

2. The allusions to the fright that might be caused "among the ladies" by the stage lion (i. 2. 76-78; iii. 1. 28-47). It can hardly be doubted that this is a reminiscence of what actually happened in the Scottish court at the baptism of Prince Henry, August 30, 1594, when a triumphal car "should have been drawn in by a lion, but because his presence might have brought some fear to the nearest, or that the sight of the lights and torches might have commoved his tameness, it was thought meet that the Moor should supply that room."¹

This same date of 1594-95 seems to me to suit admirably with the character and style of the play. It clearly belongs to the earliest group of Shakespeare's comedies. It abounds with rhyme, with strained conceits, with antithesis and other rhetorical devices. The blank verse is regular and monotonous; the use of trisyllabic feet, of run-on lines, of broken lines, of feminine endings, of the countless other devices by which Shakespeare gradually came to give infinite variety to his rhythm, is as yet timid and rare. Then, again, the interest of character is very slight. Bottom is a masterpiece and Theseus a clever sketch, but the others are wooden, compared with the living figures in *The Merchant of Venice*, which was probably written in 1596-97. Moreover, they fall naturally into pairs, with that antithetic grouping which, like the antithetic rhythm, is so marked in Shakespeare's early work. On the other hand, if *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is compared with *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, it betrays in many ways a notable advance. It is written with a firmer and less experimental hand, with a more daring use of materials, with a more striking mastery of poetic expression. And technically, too, the absence of doggerel rhyme from the comic scenes is a mark of development. If we make it one of the early group, but the last of that group, all the conditions of the problem are satisfied. Certain themes and situations are

¹ An account of the ceremony was published at Edinburgh in 1594 (?). This was reprinted from the later edition of 1603 in Nichols' *Progresses of Elizabeth*, vol. iii, under the title: *A True Account of the most triumphant and royal Accomplishment of the Baptism of the most Excellent, Right High and Mighty Prince Henry Frederick, etc.*, p. 19.

repeated from the earlier plays: thus the situation of the lovers before Theseus recalls that of Ægeon before the Duke in *The Comedy of Errors*; but the closest affinities in this respect are with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the play which on this hypothesis immediately preceded. In both, the interference of the claims of love with those of friendship forms an important element in the plot.¹

If *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written in 1594-95, it must also be associated with *Richard II* and *Romeo and Juliet*. These three plays — a comedy, a history, and a tragedy — make up a well-defined group, all characterized by a markedly lyrical quality. They are dramatic poems rather than dramas, and appear to point to an attempt, a transient attempt, of the poet to find dramatic value in painting the phases of emotion rather than the development of character. The connection of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with *Romeo and Juliet* is even closer; they are in some sort pendants to each other. Both deal directly with the problem of the function of love in life; but whereas in the comedy, as will presently be shown, it is love the lawless, the misleader, that is put before us, the tragedy goes deeper and gives us love the redeemer, the reconciler. Finally, it may be pointed out that the fate of the "star-crossed lovers" creates a situation exactly parallel to that burlesqued in *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Such evidence, then, as we can arrive at points to the winter of 1594-95 as the most probable date for the composition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Bearing this in mind, we may consider the attempts that have been made to determine the occasion on which it was first presented. In its wealth of dance and song, in its capacities for scenic effect, in its introduction of supernatural beings, the play resembles, more than any other of Shakespeare's comedies, the type of the fashionable Elizabethan masque. And in the juxtaposition of clowns and fairies we get just that favorite contrast of poetry and burlesque out of which Jonson afterward developed the set form of the antimasque.² Now masques were distinctly aristocratic and not popular entertainments; they took place not on the public stages, but in the great halls of palaces, of the Inns of Court, or of private dwellings. They were especially in vogue at marriage festivities. As *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

¹ Shakespeare's preoccupation with this theme at this period of his life should be read in the light afforded by the *Sonnets*.

² See the admirable sketch of the history of the masque in Mr. Verity's Pitt Press edition of Milton's *Arcades* and *Comus*.

deals with a marriage, and ends with what is practically an epithalamium, the theory is at least plausible that it was written to grace the wedding night of some young noble. Moreover, in view of the graceful and extremely irrelevant compliment to Elizabeth, which is inserted in Act ii, sc. 1,¹ it is difficult not to suspect that the wedding in question was one at which the queen was herself present. The two occasions for which this extraordinary honor has been most often claimed are the marriage of the Earl of Essex to Frances Lady Sidney in 1590, and that of the Earl of Southampton to Elizabeth Vernon in 1598.² Both of these are decidedly out of the question. Not only is the one too early and the other too late, but also they were both secret marriages, carefully concealed from the displeasure of the queen, and certainly not celebrated in her presence, or likely to have been attended with sumptuous festivities.

To Mr. Fleay we owe another suggestion which does not run counter to known facts. January 26, 1594³, William Stanley, Earl of Derby, married Elizabeth Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford. The wedding took place at the Court at Greenwich, and therefore almost certainly in the presence of Elizabeth. Lord Derby, like all the Stanleys, was interested in the drama, and it is worth noting that the very company to which Shakespeare belonged had been the servants of his elder brother and predecessor, Ferdinando, until the time of his death, April 16, 1594. It is, then, not impossible that the play was first given on the occasion of this wedding; but there is no evidence whatever to suggest that this was the case.⁴

Whatever this occasion may have been, we know from Qq that the play was performed "publickely" before it was printed in

¹ See Appendix F.

² The two champions of the claims of Essex have been Elze in his *Essays on Shakespeare*, and Herman Kurz in the *Jahrbuch* (vol. iv) of the German Shakespeare Society for 1869. The claims of Southampton are supported by Mr. Gerald Massey in his *Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets* and earlier work. Mr. Massey interprets the whole plot as referring to the rivalry for Southampton's affections between Elizabeth Vernon and Penelope Rich. A pretty show for a wedding night! But then Elze finds in the *Ariadne* and *Perigeneia* passage an allusion to Essex's past amours!

³ This is the date given for the event in Stow's *Annals*. All the peerages give it as 26 June, 1594. Of course this brings us temptingly near to Midsummer Day (June 24), but then it would be too early for the allusion to the lion at Prince Henry's christening, August thirtieth. Moreover, Midsummer, by the Old Calendar, was June eleventh.

⁴ On a supposed allusion to Spenser's *Tears of the Muses*, see note on v. 1. 52-53.

1600. There are certain indications which make me think that it was also retouched, before it was published. Three passages, iii. 2. 201-219, v. 1. 1-27, v. 1. 84-105, show a markedly larger proportion of feminine endings than the rest of the play: in the first two, about a third, in the last, about a fourth. Elsewhere there are not more than half a dozen such lines in a hundred. It is noticeable also that the rhythm and thought are characteristic of Shakespeare's later style, and that the content is quite undramatic and does not affect the action at all. See Appendix H.

The later history of the play is not without its points of interest. It appears to have been performed on Sunday, September 27, 1631, in the house of John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln. This performance on the Sabbath gave great offence to the Puritans, and there exist among Laud's papers (*Lambeth MS.* 1030, Nos. 4, 5) two documents referring to the matter. One is a letter of reproof from John Spencer, a Puritanical preacher, to a lady who was in the audience. The other is a burlesque order or decree of this same John Spencer, condemning the Bishop, and concluding as follows: "Likewise wee doe order, that Mr. Wilson, because hee was a speciall plotter and Contriver of this busines, and did in suche a brutishe manner acte the same with an Asses head, therefore hee shall uppon Tuisday next, from 6 of the Clocke in the Morning till sixe of the Clocke at night sitt in the Porters Lodge at my Lords Bishoppes house with his feete in the stocks and Atttyred with his Asse head, and a bottle of haye sett before him, and this superscripcion on his breast —

'Good people I have played the beast
And brought ill things to passe;
I was a man, but thus have made
Myselfe a Silly Asse.'

Some later hand has written upon the document "the play M. Night Dr.," and one cannot doubt that this is correct.¹

After the suppression of the theatres, the play was abridged into a farce or droll, under the title of *The Merry Conceited Humours of Bottom the Weaver*, which seems to have been acted in private. This was printed in 1661, and again among other drolls in Kirkman's *Wits, or Sport upon Sport* (1672). The original play was restored to the stage at the Restoration, when Pepys saw it, and

¹ Spencer refers again to the event in his *Discourse of Divers Petitions* (1641), p. 19, and speaks of Wilson as "a Cunning Musition." I suppose he was Dr. John Wilson, whose *Psalterium Carolinum* was published in 1657, and *Cheerful Aires or Ballads* in 1660.

commented as follows, under the date September 29, 1662: "To the King's Theatre, where we saw *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, which I had never seen before, nor shall ever again, for it is the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life." In 1692 it was converted into an opera, with music by Purcell, and numerous additional songs and other sophistications of the text. This and other adaptations continued to be acted until the present century, when a purer text was restored. Mendelssohn's famous music was written in 1826, and performed at a revival of the play under the direction of Tieck at Berlin in the following year.

The play occupies a considerable place in the history of fairy literature. To it and to the description of Queen Mab in *Romeo and Juliet*, Drayton's *Nymphidia*, the fairy poems in Herrick's *Hesperides* and Randolph's *Amyntas* owe their inspiration. The figure of Robin Goodfellow became popular in ballad and chap-book. Besides the prose *Life of Robin Goodfellow* (1628), there exist two or three ballads, one of which has been attributed without much authority to Ben Jonson.¹ The same poet modelled upon *A Midsummer Night's Dream* his *Masque of Oberon, or the Satyr*. Still earlier, the curious anonymous play of *Narcissus, A Twelfth Night Merriment*,² and W. Percy's *Fairy Pastoral, or Forest of Elves*, in which Oberon is introduced,³ show marked traces of the same influence. Finally, Mr. Verity, in his admirable edition of the play, has called attention to the frequent reminiscences of it that are scattered through the poems of Milton.⁴

2. SOURCES OF THE PLOT

So far as we know, Shakespeare was not indebted to any single model for the plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It combines situations and motives gathered from widely different sources and welded together by the incomparable art of the poet. But clearly the framework of the story, so far as it centres in Theseus, is adapted from the *Knight's Tale* of Chaucer. In the tale, as in the play, the action has its rise in the celebration of Theseus' wedding; there, too, the characters go forth to "doon their observance to May,"

¹ Cf. Sidgwick, *The Sources and Analogues of "A Midsummer Night's Dream,"* 1908.

² See Appendix E.

³ This play was edited by Hazlewood for the Roxburghe Club (1824) from a MS. at Alnwick Castle.

⁴ There is a careful study of Shakespeare's imitators in C. C. Hense's *Untersuchungen und Studien* (1884). See also Appendix A.

and there the theme of friendship broken across by love is illustrated in Palamon and Arcite, as here, though differently, in Hermia and Helena. Several slighter parallels of incident and phrase are recorded in the notes.¹ Other facts with regard to Theseus Shakespeare probably obtained from the *Life of Theseus* in Sir Thomas North's translation of *Plutarch's Lives* (1579). I have thought it well to reprint in Appendix C² all the passages from which he appears to have borrowed anything.

The story of Pyramus and Thisbe was familiar to Elizabethan readers. Shakespeare probably read it in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, iv. 55-166, or in the translation of that poem by Arthur Golding (1565). Chaucer included the *Legend of Thisbe of Babylon* in his *Legend of Good Women*; and the Stationers' Registers for 1562 record a license to William Greffeth "for pryntinge of a boke intituled *Perymus and Thesbye*." A poem on the subject in Clement Robinson's *A Handefull of Pleasant Delites* (1584), by I. Thomson, has some verbal resemblances to Shakespeare's burlesque. It will be found, with Golding's version, in Appendix D.³

Two sources have been suggested for the incident of the love-juice. In neither case, I think, is the suggestion very convincing. One is Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*, in which Pluto and Proserpina, who answer as elf-king and elf-queen to Oberon and Titania, magically restore the sight of an old man, in order that he may witness his wife's frailty.⁴ The other is an episode in the Spanish *Diana Enamorada* of the Portuguese Jorge de Montemayor. In this a charm is used to transfer the affections of an amorous shepherd from one person to another, much as the affections of Demetrius and Lysander are transferred in the play.⁵ The English translation of the *Diana Enamorada*, by Bartholomew Yong, was not published until 1598, but in the preface it is stated to have been written sixteen years before, and therefore Shakespeare may have

¹ See notes to i. 1. 16, 167; iii. 2. 338; iv. 1. 116; v. 1. 51. *The Knight's Tale* had already been dramatized in Richard Edwardes' *Palamon and Arcite*, as it was afterwards by Fletcher, together, as many think, with Shakespeare himself, in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. The relation of Shakespeare's plot to that of Chaucer has been worked out by L. Proescholdt, *On the Sources of Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream* (1878), and B. Ten Brink in the *Jahrbuch*, xiii. 92.

² See also Appendix G on the connection of Titania and Theseus.

³ There is a complete account of the many versions of the legend in Dr. Georg Hart's *Die Pyramus-und-Thisbe Saga* (Passau, Part i. 1889, Part ii. 1891).

⁴ L. Proescholdt, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁵ F. Krauss, *Eine Quelle zu Sh. Sommernachtstraum* (*Jahrbuch*, xi. 226),

seen it in manuscript. Further, a play called *The History of Felix and Philomena*, which was probably founded on Montemayor's romance, was acted at court in January, 1585. Whether in the original or in a translation, Shakespeare seems clearly to have used the *Diana Enamorada* as a source for *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

The fairy material is derived from many sources: from earlier plays, some of which are now lost, from classical and English folklore, possibly a little from Spenser's *Faërie Queene*, certainly much from Reginald Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584). See Appendix A.

3. CRITICAL APPRECIATION

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a dramatic fantasy rather than a drama. It was written, in all probability, not for the public stage, but as an interlude in the festivities of some wedding at court. The conditions of its production were those of the masque, and to these it was bound to conform. Now the masque, unlike the regular drama, was always presented with an abundance of scenery and stage accessories. It was light and amusing in character, making its principal appeal to the senses and the fancy of the audience. It had no need to touch the deeper springs of imagination, or to win the attention of critical spectators. A profusion of dance and song, picturesque staging and pretty costumes, a sprinkling of courtly compliment, a piquant contrast of poetry and clowning, — these things were enough for the entertainment of the nobles and the maids of honor who assembled at Gloriana's palace of Greenwich. These things, therefore, we find in full measure in the play. They give it its tone and dramatic character.¹ Yet the poet being Shakespeare, we do not, as in a modern burlesque, find these things and nothing more. For Shakespeare is always philosopher as well as playwright; he will not write merely to enchant the eye and delight the ear, nor merely for the excitement of a good story, but always and at all times to utter the truth that is in him, to give dramatic form to significant ideas, ideas that are a criticism of life. And therefore we may be sure that at the heart even of a dramatic fantasy by Shakespeare there will lie some such central idea, which will give an inner meaning and a unity to the whole, without disturbing the madness of

¹ Probably there was even more singing and dancing in the play than the printed text indicates. See, e.g. the note on v. 1. 386. I suspect, moreover, that the rhymed trochaic speeches assigned to the fairies were sung or given as recitative.

the fun and frolic. For this is perhaps the consummation of his art, to be a thinker without being pedantic, and while handling the deep themes of conduct and existence never to mount the stage in the inappropriate garb of the pulpit.

The vital question, then, for the student of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is: What did the poet mean by it? What central idea, over and above the poetry and the sensuous charm of the presentment, does it contain? We have seen that the plays which fall nearest to this in point of date are *Richard the Second*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. In these we find the young poet concerning himself with two subjects of perpetual interest to youth — politics and love. He has begun that great trilogy in which, under the guise of history, he purposed to deal with the central problem of politics under the Tudors, the problem of the relation of king to people. Negatively in *Richard the Second* and *Henry the Fourth*, positively in *Henry the Fifth*, he works out, as Plato might have worked out, if he had written dramas, his conception of the essential nature of the genuine king. Of his preoccupation with this theme we cannot but find a trace in our play in the character of Theseus, so obviously a sketch for the more finished picture of Henry the Fifth, the broadly human king, the man of deeds, not words, not too finely tempered to be in touch with his people, — in whom we recognize the leading features of Shakespeare's ideal of sovereignty. But the character of Theseus is only a side issue in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; it is not there that we look for the keynote of the play. Outside the Histories, we find Shakespeare at this time particularly absorbed in the theme of love. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* he deals with the conflict in a life of the rival claims of love and friendship.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, he represents love as the supreme power, imperious and resistless in its oncoming, which lays hold of two lives, and exalts them almost in a moment to the highest pitch of dignity of which human nature is capable. Of a boy and a girl it makes a man and a woman; it purifies and glorifies, reconciles and redeems. But *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a comedy, and to the comic spirit love betrays itself in quite another guise. It is no longer Dante's "lord of terrible aspect" with whom we have to do, but rather roguish Cupid, the irresponsible child-god, with his blinded eyes and his erring arrows. "Hast been in love?" says the young shepherd to the old one in *As You Like It*, then:

"How many actions most ridiculous

Hast thou been drawn to by thy fantasy?" (ii. 4. 30-31.)

Love, as interpreted by the comic spirit, is a certain fine lunacy in the brain of youth, not an integral part of life, but a disturbing element in it. The lover is a being of strange caprices and strange infidelities, beyond the control of reason, and swayed with every gust of passion. He is at odds for the time with all the established order of things, a rebel against the authority of parents, a rebel against friendship, a rebel against his own vows. This is love as it figures in comedy, and in the presentation and analysis of this lies the point of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Bearing in mind, then, this central idea of the lawlessness and the laughableness of love, let us observe how carefully, for all the apparent whimsicality of structure, it is kept to the front in the working out of the play. As is generally the case with Shakespeare's comedies, the plot is composed of several stories, which are woven together with remarkable ingenuity. There is the story of Theseus' Wedding, the story of the Athenian Lovers, the story of the Quarrel of Oberon and Titania, the story of the Handicraftsmen's Play, and finally the story or interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe. The first of these serves as the link that holds all the rest together; for it is at Theseus' wedding that Hermia's fate is to be decided; it is to celebrate this that the fairies have come from the farthest steppe of India, and it is for this that Bottom and his fellows are painfully conning their interlude. But the most important story, from the point of view of the central idea, is that of the Athenian Lovers. As Ten Brink has pointed out in his excellent study of the play, the motive of this story is varied from that of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. In the *Knight's Tale* the friendship of Palamon and Arcite is broken by their common love for Emilia. This corresponds very closely to the situation of Proteus and Valentine in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. But both in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare has complicated the situation by introducing a second woman, and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he has still further modified it by making the broken friendship that of the women, not that of the men. In this friendship broken by love we get, then, one illustration of the central idea.

But there are others in the story. There is Hermia's defiance of her father and of Athenian law for the sake of Lysander; and above all there is the extraordinary inconstancy which both Lysander and Demetrius display in the bestowal of their affections. Demetrius has deserted Helena for Hermia before the play begins; and in the course of the night in the wood, Lysander goes over to

Helena and back to Hermia, and Demetrius in his turn goes back to Helena without any apparent reason. Surely the central idea of the play is carried to a point that is almost farcical. At the crisis, when the cross-purposes are at their maddest, one can only echo Puck's criticism,

"Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

Of course, Shakespeare's treatment of his theme is symbolical, rather than psychological. In *Romeo and Juliet*, he shows us the difference that love makes in the actual characters of the lovers as they blossom out before us. But the lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are but faintly sketched and barely differentiated. Helena is tall and fair and timid; Hermia is little and dark and shrewish. Demetrius is crabbed and Lysander is languid. It is difficult to say much more. They are but the abstract Hes and Shes of the conventional love story. But this want of characterization is of little importance, because the story is told symbolically. The transferences of affection which form its principal revolutions are represented as due to supernatural agency, to the caprices of the fairies. Moreover, taking perhaps a hint from Lyly, Shakespeare invites us to consider the whole thing as a dream. This is the significance of the title. It is such a vision of life as a man might have on Midsummer Night, the season of the year around which Elizabethan superstition gathered most closely. And yet it is not all a dream, or, if a dream, it is one that passes easily into actual life. For these inconstancies of which Oberon's "love-in-idleness" is the cause are, after all, not really different in kind from the initial inconstancy of Demetrius to Helena, for which no such reason is proposed. And again, when Demetrius is by magic restored to his first love, the effects of this continue on into the waking life as a quite natural thing which provokes no amazement. As far as the story of the lovers is concerned, the introduction of the supernatural element does not bring about anything that would have been impossible or improbable without it. The magical "love-in-idleness" really does nothing more than represent symbolically the familiar workings of actual love-in-idleness in the human heart. Boys in love change their minds just so, or almost just so, without any whisper of the fairies to guide them. Romeo left his Rosaline quite as suddenly as Lysander left his Hermia.

It will help us to see this point more precisely if we consider that Shakespeare habitually uses the supernatural in much the same way, not with a literal faith in the personages or the acts

which he depicts, but symbolically as a recognition of a mystery, of an unexplained element in the ordinary course of human affairs on earth. It is his confession of ignorance, of the fact that just there he has come upon something which baffles analysis, something ultimate, which exists, but which cannot be quite accounted for. Thus in *Macbeth* the witches symbolize the double mystery of temptation and of retribution;¹ in *The Tempest* the magic of Prospero and the spiritual forces which are at his beck and call symbolize the mystery of an overruling providence. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the mystery bound up with the central idea of the play, is the existence of that freakish irresponsible element of human nature out of which, to the eye of the comic spirit, the ethical and emotional vagaries of lovers take their rise. And that this element does exist is recognized and emphasized by Shakespeare in his usual way when he takes the workings of it in the story and explains them symbolically as due to the interference of supernatural agency.

In human life the disturbing element of "love-in-idleness" is generally only a passing fever. There is a period of *Sturm und Drang*, and then the man or woman begins to take life seriously, and is ready to submit to its discipline and to accept its reasonable responsibilities. And so by the side of Lysander and Demetrius we have the grave figure of the Athenian duke, Theseus. Theseus has had his wayward youth; he has "played with light loves in the portal," with Perigenia and Ægles and others, ay, and in the glimmering night even with Queen Titania herself. Moreover, in his passion for Hippolyta he has approached her through deeds of violence; he has won her love by doing her injuries. But now, like the Henry the Fifth of whom he is a prototype, he has put away childish things; he is the serene, law-abiding king, no less than the loving and tender husband. Thus the story of Theseus' Wedding not only, as has been said, serves to hold the plot together, but also contributes its share to the illustration of the central idea.

When we turn to the Fairies, we find that what enters into human life only as a transitory disturbing element is in them the normal law of their being. They are irresponsible creatures throughout, eternal children. They belong to the winds and the clouds and the flowers, to all in nature that is beautiful and gracious and fleeting; but of the characteristics by which man differs from these, the sense of law and the instinct of self-control, they show no trace. Puck, the fairy jester, is the tricky house sprite whose

¹ See p. xvii of my edition of *Macbeth* in this series.

sport it is to bring perplexity upon hapless mortals. Oberon and Titania are jealous and reconciled to each other a dozen times a day, while for culmination of their story there is the absurd spectacle of a fairy in love with an ass. In them is represented, as it were *in vacuo*, the very quality of which it is the object of the play to reveal the partial and occasional workings, in the heart of humanity.

In the scenes of the Handicraftsmen, the central idea does not find any direct illustration. The story is required, partly to introduce the interlude, but still more to provide that comic contrast which, as has been pointed out, was essential to the masque. It is ingeniously interwoven into the fairy-story by making Bottom the instrument of Oberon's revenge upon Titania. And it is in Bottom that the humor reaches its climax. He is the first of Shakespeare's supreme comic creations, greater than the Costard of *Love's Labour's Lost* or the Launce of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. From beginning to end his absolute self-possession never for a moment fails him. He lords it over his fellow actors, as though he, and not Quince, were poet and stage-manager in one; he accepts the amorous attentions of a queen with calm serenity as no more than he might naturally have expected; nor does he ever, either before or after his transformation, betray the slightest suspicion of the fact that he is after all only an ass. It has often been thought that in the rehearsal scenes Shakespeare was drawing upon the humors of such rustic actors as might have ventured a Whitsun pastoral at Stratford-on-Avon; yet one fears that the foibles of the greenroom are much the same in the humblest and the loftiest walks of the profession, and who shall say that the poet is not poking good-humored fun at some of his fellows of the Lord Chamberlain's company?

Finally, with the interlude, we come back to the central idea once more. In the ill-starred loves of Pyramus and Thisbe, their assignation, their elopement, and their terrible end, we have but a burlesque presentment of the same theme that has occupied us throughout. It is all a matter of how the poet chooses to put it. Precisely the same situation that in *Romeo and Juliet* asks our tears here moves to unextinguishable laughter. And so the serious interest of the play dissolves in mirth, and while the musicians break into the exquisite poetry of the epithalamium, the playwright stands and watches us with the smile of wise tolerance on his lips.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S
DREAM

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THESEUS	Duke of Athens
EGEUS	Father to Hermia
LYSANDER	} In love with Hermia
DEMETRIUS	
PHILOSTRATE	Master of the Revels to Theseus
QUINCE	A carpenter
SNUG	A joiner
BOTTOM	A weaver
FLUTE	A bellows-mender
SNOUT	A tinker
STARVELING	A tailor
HIPPOLYTA	Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus
HERMIA	Daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander
HELENA	In love with Demetrius
OBERON	King of the fairies
TITANIA	Queen of the fairies
PUCK	or Robin Goodfellow
PEASEBLOSSOM	} Fairies
COBWEB	
MOTH	
MUSTARDSEED	

Other fairies attending their King and Queen. Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta.

SCENE — ATHENS and a wood near it

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

ACT I

SCENE I — *Athens. The palace of THESEUS*

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, and Attendants

The. Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace; four happy days bring in
Another moon: but, O, methinks, how slow
This old moon wanes! she lingers my desires,
Like to a step-dame or a dowager
Long withering out a young man's revenue.

Hip. Four days will quickly steep themselves in
night;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities. 10

The. Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth:
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;
The pale companion is not for our pomp.

[Exit Philostrate.]

Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
And won thy love, doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph and with revelling.

Enter EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, and DEMETRIUS

Ege. Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke ! 20

The. Thanks, good Egeus : what's the news with thee ?

Ege. Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.
Stand forth, Lysander : and, my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child :
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes
And interchanged love-tokens with my child :
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung 30
With feigning voice verses of feigning love,
And stolen the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats, messengers
Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth :
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart,
Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,
To stubborn harshness : and, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius, 40
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,
As she is mine, I may dispose of her :
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provided in that case.

The. What say you, Hermia ? be advised, fair maid :

To you your father should be as a god ;

One that composed your beauties, yea, and one
 To whom you are but as a form in wax
 By him imprinted and within his power 50
 To leave the figure or disfigure it.
 Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

Her. So is Lysander.

The. In himself he is ;
 But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
 The other must be held the worthier.

Her. I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

The. Rather your eyes must with his judgement
 look.

Her. I do entreat your grace to pardon me.
 I know not by what power I am made bold,
 Nor how it may concern my modesty, 60
 In such a presence here to plead my thoughts ;
 But I beseech your grace that I may know
 The worst that may befall me in this case,
 If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

The. Either to die the death or to abjure
 For ever the society of men.
 Therefore, fair, Hermia, question your desires ;
 Know of your youth, examine well your blood,
 Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
 You can endure the livery of a nun, 70
 For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,
 To live a barren sister all your life,
 Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.
 Thrice-blessed they that master so their blood,
 To undergo such maiden pilgrimage ;
 But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd,
 Than that which withering on the virgin thorn

Grows, lives and dies in single blessedness.

Her. So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield my virgin patent up 80
Unto his lordship, whose unwished yoke
My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

The. Take time to pause; and, by the next new
moon —

The sealing-day betwixt my love and me,
For everlasting bond of fellowship —
Upon that day either prepare to die
For disobedience to your father's will,
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would;
Or on Diana's altar to protest
For aye austerity and single life. 90

Dem. Relent, sweet Hermia: and, Lysander,
I yield

Thy crazed title to my certain right.

Lys. You have her father's love, Demetrius;
Let me have Hermia's: do you marry him.

Ege. Scornful Lysander! true, he hath my love,
And what is mine my love shall render him.
And she is mine, and all my right of her
I do estate unto Demetrius.

Lys. I am, my lord, as well derived as he,
As well possess'd; my love is more than his; 100
My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd,
If not with vantage, as Demetrius';
And, which is more than all these boasts can be,
I am beloved of beauteous Hermia:
Why should not I then prosecute my right?
Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,

And won her soul ; and she, sweet lady, dotes,
 Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,
 Upon this spotted and inconstant man. 110

The. I must confess that I have heard so much,
 And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof ;
 But, being over-full of self-affairs,
 My mind did lose it. But, Demetrius, come ;
 And come, Egeus ; you shall go with me,
 I have some private schooling for you both.
 For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
 To fit your fancies to your father's will ;
 Or else the law of Athens yields you up —
 Which by no means we may extenuate — 120
 To death, or to a vow of single life.

Come, my Hippolyta : what cheer, my love ?
 Demetrius and Egeus, go along :
 I must employ you in some business
 Against our nuptial and confer with you
 Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

Ege. With duty and desire we follow you.

[*Exeunt all but Lysander and Hermia.*]

Lys. How now, my love ! why is your cheek so pale ?

How chance the roses there do fade so fast ?

Her. Belike for want of rain, which I could well 130
 Beteem them from the tempest of my eyes.

Lys. Ay me ! for aught that I could ever read,
 Could ever hear by tale or history,
 The course of true love never did run smooth ;
 But, either it was different in blood, —

Her. O cross ! too high to be enthrall'd to low.

Lys. Or else misgraffed in respect of years, —

Her. O spite ! too old to be engaged to young.

Lys. Or else it stood upon the choice of friends, —

Her. O hell ! to choose love by another's eyes. 140

Lys. Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentany as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream ;
Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
And ere a man hath power to say " Behold !"
The jaws of darkness do devour it up :
So quick bright things come to confusion.

Her. If then true lovers have been ever cross'd, 150
It stands as an edict in destiny :
Then let us teach our trial patience,
Because it is a customary cross,
As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers.

Lys. A good persuasion : therefore, hear me,
Hermia.

I have a widow aunt, a dowager
Of great revenue, and she hath no child :
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues ;
And she respects me as her only son. 160
There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee ;
And to that place the sharp Athenian law
Cannot pursue us. If thou lovest me then,
Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night ;
And in the wood, a league without the town,
Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
To do observance to a morn of May,

There will I stay for thee.

Her. My good Lysander!

I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow,
By his best arrow with the golden head, 170
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,
And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,
When the false Trojan under sail was seen,
By all the vows that ever men have broke,
In number more than ever women spoke,
In that same place thou hast appointed me,
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

Lys. Keep promise, love. Look, here comes
Helena.

Enter HELENA

Her. God speed fair Helena! whither away? 180

Hel. Call you me fair? that fair again unsay.
Demetrius loves your fair: O happy fair!
Your eyes are lode-stars; and your tongue's sweet
air

More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.
Sickness is catching: O, were favour so,
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;
My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet
melody.

Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated, 190
The rest I'd give to be to you translated.
O, teach me how you look, and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

Her. I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

Hel. O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill !

Her. I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

Hel. O that my prayers could such affection move !

Her. The more I hate, the more he follows me.

Hel. The more I love, the more he hateth me.

Her. His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine. 200

Hel. None, but your beauty : would that fault were mine !

Her. Take comfort : he no more shall see my face ;

Lysander and myself will fly this place.

Before the time I did Lysander see,

Seem'd Athens as a paradise to me :

O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,

That he hath turn'd a heaven unto a hell !

Lys. Helen, to you our minds we will unfold :

To-morrow night, when Phoebe doth behold

Her silver visage in the watery glass, 210

Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,

A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,

Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.

Her. And in the wood, where often you and I

Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie,

Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,

There my Lysander and myself shall meet ;

And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,

To seek new friends and stranger companies.

Farewell, sweet playfellow : pray thou for us ; 220

And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius !

Keep word, Lysander : we must starve our sight
From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

Lys. I will, my Hermia. [Exit Herm

Helena, adieu :

As you on him, Demetrius dote on you ! [Exit.

Hel. How happy some o'er other some can be !

Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.

But what of that ? Demetrius thinks not so ;

He will not know what all but he do know :

And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,

230

So I, admiring of his qualities :

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,

Love can transpose to form and dignity :

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind ;

And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind :

Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste ;

Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste :

And therefore is Love said to be a child,

Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.

As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,

240

So the boy Love is perjured every where :

For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,

He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine ;

And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,

So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.

I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight :

Then to the wood will he to-morrow night

Pursue her ; and for this intelligence

If I have thanks, it is a dear expense :

But herein mean I to enrich my pain,

250

To have his sight thither and back again. [Exit.

SCENE II — *Athens. QUINCE'S house*

*Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and
STARVELING*

Quin. Is all our company here?

Bot. You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.

Quin. Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before the duke and the duchess, on his wedding-day at night.

Bot. First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point. 10

Quin. Marry, our play is, The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby.

Bot. A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.

Quin. Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

Bot. Ready. Name what part I am for, and 20 proceed.

Quin. You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

Bot. What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

Quin. A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.

Bot. That will ask some tears in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look to

their eyes; I will move storms, I will condole in some measure. To the rest; yet my chief humour 30 is for a tyrant: I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split.

The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison gates;
And Phibbus' car
Shall shine from far
And make and mar
The foolish Fates.

40

This was lofty! Now name the rest of the players. This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein; a lover is more condoling.

Quin. Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

Flu. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. Flute, you must take Thisby on you.

Flu. What is Thisby? a wandering knight?

Quin. It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

Flu. Nay, faith, let not me play a woman; I have a beard coming.

50

Quin. That's all one: you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

Bot. An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too, I'll speak in a monstrous little voice, "Thisne, Thisne;" "Ah Pyramus, my lover dear! thy Thisby dear, and lady dear!"

Quin. No, no; you must play Pyramus: and, Flute, you Thisby.

Bot. Well, proceed.

Quin. Robin Starveling, the tailor.

60

Star. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother. Tom Snout, the tinker.

Snout. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. You, Pyramus' father: myself, Thisby's father. Snug, the joiner; you, the lion's part: and, I hope, here is a play fitted.

Snug. Have you the lion's part written? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

Quin. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

Bot. Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, "Let him roar again, let him roar again."

Quin. An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.

All. That would hang us, every mother's son.

80

Bot. I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us: but I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 't were any nightingale.

Quin. You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man; a proper man, as one shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely gentleman-like man: therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

90

Bot. Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?

Quin. Why, what you will.

Bot. I will discharge it in either your straw-colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow.

Quin. Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play barefaced. But, 100 masters, here are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request you and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night; and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight; there will we rehearse, for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogged with company, and our devices known. In the meantime I will draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not.

Bot. We will meet; and there we may rehearse 110 most obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be perfect: adieu.

Quin. At the duke's oak we meet.

Bot. Enough; hold or cut bow-strings. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT II

SCENE I — *A wood near Athens*

Enter, from opposite sides, a Fairy, and PUCK

Puck. How now, spirit! whither wander you?

Fai. Over hill, over dale,

Thorough bush, thorough brier,

Over park, over pale,
 Thorough flood, thorough fire,
 I do wander every where,
 Swifter than the moon's sphere;
 And I serve the fairy queen,
 To dew her orbs upon the green.
 The cowslips tall her pensioners be : 10
 In their gold coats spots you see;
 Those be rubies, fairy favours,
 In those freckles live their savours :
 I must go seek some dewdrops here
 And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.
 Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone :
 Our queen and all her elves come here anon.

Puck. The king doth keep his revels here to-
 night :

Take heed the queen come not within his sight;
 For Oberon is passing fell and wrath, 20
 Because that she as her attendant hath
 A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king;
 She never had so sweet a changeling;
 And jealous Oberon would have the child
 Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild;
 But she perforce withholds the loved boy,
 Crowns him with flowers and makes him all her
 joy :

And now they never meet in grove or green,
 By fountain clear, or spangled starlight sheen,
 But they do square, that all their elves for fear 30
 Creep into acorn-cups and hide them there.

Fai. Either I mistake your shape and making
 quite,

Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
 Call'd Robin Goodfellow : are not you he
 That frights the maidens of the villagery ;
 Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern
 And bootless make the breathless housewife churn ;
 And sometime make the drink to bear no barm ;
 Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm ?
 Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet Puck, 40
 You do their work, and they shall have good
 luck :

Are not you he ?

Puck. Thou speak'st aright ;
 I am that merry wanderer of the night.
 I jest to Oberon and make him smile
 When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
 Neighing in likeness of a filly foal :
 And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
 In very likeness of a roasted crab,
 And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
 And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale. 50
 The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
 Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me ;
 Then slip I from her, then down topples she,
 And "tailor" cries, and falls into a cough ;
 And then the whole quire hold their hips and
 laugh,
 And waxen in their mirth and neeze and swear
 A merrier hour was never wasted there.
 But, room, fairy ! here comes Oberon.

Fai. And here my mistress. Would that he
 were gone !

Enter, from one side, OBERON, with his train; from the other, TITANIA, with hers

Obe. Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania. 60

Tita. What, jealous Oberon! Fairies, skip hence:

I have forsworn his bed and company.

Obe. Tarry, rash wanton: am not I thy lord?

Tita. Then I must be thy lady: but I know
When thou hast stolen away from fairy land,
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
Come from the farthest steppe of India?
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon, 70
Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

Obe. How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering
night

From Perigenia, whom he ravished?
And make him with fair Ægles break his faith,
With Ariadne and Antiopa? 80

Tita. These are the forgeries of jealousy:
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,

But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.
 Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
 As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
 Contagious fogs; which falling in the land 90
 Hath every pelting river made so proud
 That they have overborne their continents:
 The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
 The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
 Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard;
 The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
 And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;
 The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud,
 And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
 For lack of tread are undistinguishable: 100
 The human mortals want their winter here.
 No night is now with hymn or carol blest:
 Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
 Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
 That rheumatic diseases do abound:
 And thorough this distemperature we see
 The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
 Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
 And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
 An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds 110
 Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer,
 The childing autumn, angry winter, change
 Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,
 By their increase, now knows not which is which:
 And this same progeny of evils comes
 From our debate, from our dissension;
 We are their parents and original.

Obe. Do you amend it then; it lies in you:

Why should Titania cross her Oberon?

I do but beg a little changeling boy, 120

To be my henchman.

Tita. Set your heart at rest:

The fairy land buys not the child of me.

His mother was a votaress of my order:

And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,

Full often hath she gossip'd by my side,

And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,

Marking the embarked traders on the flood,

When we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive

And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;

Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait 130

Following, — her womb then rich with my young
squire, —

Would imitate, and sail upon the land,

To fetch me trifles, and return again,

As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.

But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;

And for her sake do I rear up her boy,

And for her sake I will not part with him.

Obe. How long within this wood intend you
stay?

Tita. Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day.

If you will patiently dance in our round 140

And see our moonlight revels, go with us;

If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

Obe. Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

Tita. Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies,
away!

We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

[Exit Titania with her train.]

Obe. Well, go thy way : thou shalt not from this
grove

Till I torment thee for this injury.

My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back 150
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
To hear the sea-maid's music.

Puck. I remember.

Obe. That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all arm'd : a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throned by the west,
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts ; 160
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell :
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flower ; the herb I show'd thee
once :

The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid 170
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb ; and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

Puck. I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes. *[Exit.]*

Obe. Having once this juice,
I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
The next thing then she waking looks upon,
Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull, 180
On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,
She shall pursue it with the soul of love :
And ere I take this charm from off her sight,
As I can take it with another herb,
I'll make her render up her page to me.
But who comes here? I am invisible ;
And I will overhear their conference.

Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA following him

Dem. I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me. 190
Thou told'st me they were stolen unto this wood ;
And here am I, and wode within this wood,
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

Hel. You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant ;
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
Is true as steel : leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you.

Dem. Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?
Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth 200
Tell you, I do not, nor I cannot love you?

Hel. And even for that do I love you the more :
I am your spaniel ; and, Demetrius,

The more you beat me, I will fawn on you :
 Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
 Neglect me, lose me ; only give me leave,
 Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
 What worser place can I beg in your love, —
 And yet a place of high respect with me, —
 Than to be used as you use your dog? 210

Dem. Tempt not too much the hatred of my
 spirit,

For I am sick when I do look on thee.

Hel. And I am sick when I look not on you.

Dem. You do impeach your modesty too much,
 To leave the city and commit yourself
 Into the hands of one that loves you not ;
 To trust the opportunity of night
 And the ill counsel of a desert place
 With the rich worth of your virginity.

Hel. Your virtue is my privilege for that ; 220
 It is not night when I do see your face,
 Therefore I think I am not in the night ;
 Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,
 For you in my respect are all the world :
 Then how can it be said I am alone,
 When all the world is here to look on me ?

Dem. I'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes,
 And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

Hel. The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
 Run when you will, the story shall be changed : 230
 Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase ;
 The dove pursues the griffin ; the mild hind
 Makes speed to catch the tiger ; bootless speed,
 When cowardice pursues and valour flies.

Dem. I will not stay thy questions; let me go:
Or, if thou follow me, do not believe
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

Hel. Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!
Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex: 240
We cannot fight for love, as men may do;
We should be woo'd and were not made to woo.
[*Exit Dem.*

I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell,
To die upon the hand I love so well. [*Exit.*

Obe. Fare thee well, nymph: ere he do leave
this grove,
Thou shalt fly him and he shall seek thy love.

Re-enter PUCK

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

Puck. Ay, there it is.

Obe. I pray thee, give it me.

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows, 250
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;
And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
And make her full of hateful fantasies.
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove:
A sweet Athenian lady is in love 260
With a disdainful youth; anoint his eyes:

But do it when the next thing he espies
 May be the lady : thou shalt know the man
 By the Athenian garments he hath on.
 Effect it with some care that he may prove
 More fond on her than she upon her love :
 And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

Puck. Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do
 so. *[Exeunt.*

SCENE II — *Another part of the wood*

Enter TITANIA, with her train

Tita. Come, now a roundel and a fairy song ;
 Then, for the third part of a minute, hence ;
 Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds,
 Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,
 To make my small elves coats, and some keep back
 The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders
 At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep ;
 Then to your offices and let me rest.

The Fairies sing

You spotted snakes with double tongue,
 Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen ;
 Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,
 Come not near our fairy queen.
 Philomel, with melody
 Sing in our sweet lullaby ;
 Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby :
 Never harm,
 Nor spell nor charm,
 Come our lovely lady nigh ;
 So, good night, with lullaby.

Weaving spiders, come not here ; 20
 Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence !
 Beetles black, approach not near ;
 Worm nor snail, do no offence.
 Philomel, with melody, &c.

A Fairy. Hence, away ! now all is well :
 One aloof stand sentinel.
[Exeunt Fairies. Titania sleeps.]

Enter OBERON, and squeezes the flower on Titania's eyelids

Obe. What thou seest when thou dost wake,
 Do it for thy true-love take,
 Love and languish for his sake :
 Be it ounce, or cat, or bear, 30
 Pard, or boar with bristled hair,
 In thy eye that shall appear
 When thou wakest, it is thy dear :
 Wake when some vile thing is near. *[Exit.]*

Enter LYSANDER and HERMIA

Lys. Fair love, you faint with wandering in the
 wood ;
 And to speak troth, I have forgot our way :
 We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
 And tarry for the comfort of the day.

Her. Be it so, Lysander : find you out a bed ;
 For I upon this bank will rest my head. 40

Lys. One turf shall serve as pillow for us both ;
 One heart, one bed, two bosoms and one troth.

Her. Nay, good Lysander ; for my sake, my dear,
 Lie further off yet, do not lie so near.

Lys. O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence !
 Love takes the meaning in love's conference.
 I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit
 So that but one heart we can make of it ;
 Two bosoms interchained with an oath ;
 So then two bosoms and a single troth. 50
 Then by your side no bed-room me deny ;
 For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.

Her. Lysander riddles very prettily :
 Now much beshrew my manners and my pride,
 If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.
 But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy
 Lie further off ; in human modesty,
 Such separation as may well be said
 Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,
 So far be distant ; and, good night, sweet friend : 60
 Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end !

Lys. Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I ;
 And then end life when I end loyalty !
 Here is my bed : sleep give thee all his rest !

Her. With half that wish the wisher's eyes be
 press'd ! [They sleep.

Enter PUCK

Puck. Through the forest have I gone,
 But Athenian found I none,
 On whose eyes I might approve
 This flower's force in stirring love.
 Night and silence. — Who is here ? 70
 Weeds of Athens he doth wear :
 This is he, my master said,
 Despised the Athenian maid ;

And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
 On the dank and dirty ground.
 Pretty soul ! she durst not lie
 Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.
 Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
 All the power this charm doth owe.
 When thou wakest, let love forbid 80
 Sleep his seat on thy eyelid :
 So awake when I am gone ;
 For I must now to Oberon. [Exit.

Enter DEMETRIUS and HELENA, running

Hel. Stay, though thou kill me, sweet
 Demetrius.

Dem. I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt
 me thus.

Hel. O, wilt thou darkling leave me ? do not so.

Dem. Stay, on thy peril : I alone will go. [Exit.

Hel. O, I am out of breath in this fond chase !
 The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.
 Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies ; 90
 For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.
 How came her eyes so bright ? Not with salt
 tears :

If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.
 No, no, I am as ugly as a bear ;
 For beasts that meet me run away for fear :
 Therefore no marvel though Demetrius
 Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.
 What wicked and dissembling glass of mine
 Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne ?
 But who is here ? Lysander ! on the ground ! 100

Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.

Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

Lys. [*Awaking*] And run through fire I will for
thy sweet sake.

Transparent Helena! Nature shows art,
That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.
Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

Hel. Do not say so, Lysander; say not so.
What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what
though?

Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content. 110

Lys. Content with Hermia! No; I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.

Not Hermia but Helena I love:

Who will not change a raven for a dove?

The will of man is by his reason sway'd;

And reason says you are the worthier maid.

Things growing are not ripe until their season:

So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;

And touching now the point of human skill,

Reason becomes the marshal to my will

120

And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook

Love's stories written in love's richest book.

Hel. Wherefore was I to this keen mockery
born?

When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?

Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man,

That I did never, no, nor never can,

Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,

But you must flout my insufficiency?

Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,

In such disdainful manner me to woo. 130

But fare you well : perforce I must confess

I thought you lord of more true gentleness.

O, that a lady, of one man refused,

Should of another therefore be abused ! [Exit.

Lys. She sees not Hermia. Hermia, sleep thou
there :

And never mayst thou come Lysander near !

For as a surfeit of the sweetest things

The deepest loathing to the stomach brings,

Or as the heresies that men do leave

Are hated most of those they did deceive, 140

So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,

Of all be hated, but the most of me !

And, all my powers, address your love and might

To honour Helen and to be her knight ! [Exit.

Her. [Awaking] Help me, Lysander, help me !
do thy best

To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast !

Ay me, for pity ! what a dream was here !

Lysander, look how I do quake with fear :

Methought a serpent eat my heart away,

And you sat smiling at his cruel prey. 150

Lysander ! what, removed ? Lysander ! lord !

What, out of hearing ? gone ? no sound, no word ?

Alack, where are you ? speak, an if you hear ;

Speak, of all loves ! I swoon almost with fear.

No ? then I well perceive you are not nigh :

Either death or you I'll find immediately. [Exit.

ACT III

SCENE I — *The wood. Titania lying asleep**Enter* QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and
STARVELING*Bot.* Are we all met?*Quin.* Pat, pat; and here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house; and we will do it in action as we will do it before the duke.*Bot.* Peter Quince, —*Quin.* What sayest thou, bully Bottom?*Bot.* There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisby that will never please. First, Pyramus ¹⁰ must draw a sword to kill himself; which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that?*Snout.* By'r lakin, a parlous fear.*Star.* I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.*Bot.* Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for ²⁰ the more better assurance, tell them that I Pyramus am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear.*Quin.* Well, we will have such a prologue; and it shall be written in eight and six.*Bot.* No, make it two more; let it be written in eight and eight.*Snout.* Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

Star. I fear it, I promise you.

Bot. Masters, you ought to consider with your-³⁰ selves: to bring in — God shield us! — a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living; and we ought to look to't.

Snout. Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

Bot. Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck: and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect, — "Ladies," — or "Fair⁴⁰ ladies, — I would wish you," — or "I would request you," — or "I would entreat you, — not to fear, not to tremble: my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life: no, I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are;" and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.

Quin. Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things; that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber; for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby⁵⁰ meet by moonlight.

Snout. Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

Bot. A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac; find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

Quin. Yes, it doth shine that night.

Bot. Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber window, where we play, open, and the moon may shine in at the casement.

Quin. Ay; or else one must come in with a⁶⁰

bush of thorns and a lanthorn, and say he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine. Then, there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisby, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

Snout. You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?

Bot. Some man or other must present Wall: and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or 70 some rough-cast about him, to signify wall; and let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper.

Quin. If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin: when you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake: and so every one according to his cue.

Enter PUCK behind

Puck. What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here,
So near the cradle of the fairy queen? 80
What, a play toward! I'll be an auditor;
An actor too perhaps, if I see cause.

Quin. Speak, Pyramus. Thisby, stand forth.

Bot. Thisby, the flowers of odious savours sweet, —

Quin. Odorous, odorous.

Bot. ——— odours savours sweet:

So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.
But hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,
And by and by I will to thee appear. *[Exit.]*

Puck. A stranger Pyramus than e'er played
here. [Exit. 90]

Flu. Must I speak now?

Quin. Ay, marry, must you; for you must understand he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

Flu. Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,

Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,
Most brisky juvenal and eke most lovely Jew,

As true as truest horse that yet would never
tire,

I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

Quin. "Ninus' tomb," man: why, you must 100
not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus:
you speak all your part at once, cues and all.
Pyramus enter: your cue is past; it is, "never tire."

Flu. O, — As true as truest horse, that yet
would never tire.

Re-enter PUCK, and BOTTOM with an ass's head

Bot. If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine.

Quin. O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted.
Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!

[Exeunt Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, and
Starveling.]

Puck. I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a
round,

Through bog, through bush, through brake,
through brier:

110

Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;

And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.

[*Exit.*

Bot. Why do they run away? this is a knavery of them to make me afeard.

Re-enter SNOUT

Snout. O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee?

Bot. What do you see? you see an ass-head of your own, do you? [*Exit Snout.* 120

Re-enter QUINCE

Quin. Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated. [*Exit.*

Bot. I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can: I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid. [*Sings.*

The ousel cock so black of hue,

With orange-tawny bill,

The throstle with his note so true,

130

The wren with little quill, —

Tita. [*Awaking*] What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

Bot. [*Sings*]

The finch, the sparrow and the lark,

The plain-song cuckoo gray,

Whose note full many a man doth mark,

And dares not answer nay; —

for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? who would give a bird the lie, though he cry "cuckoo" never so?

Tita. I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again : 140
 Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note ;
 So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape ;
 And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
 On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

Bot. Methinks, mistress, you should have little
 reason for that : and yet, to say the truth, reason
 and love keep little company together now-a-days ;
 the more the pity that some honest neighbours will
 not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon
 occasion. 150

Tita. Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

Bot. Not so, neither : but if I had wit enough
 to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve
 mine own turn.

Tita. Out of this wood do not desire to go :
 Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
 I am a spirit of no common rate :
 The summer still doth tend upon my state ;
 And I do love thee : therefore, go with me ;
 I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee, 160
 And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
 And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost
 sleep :

And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
 That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.

Peaseblossom ! Cobweb ! Moth ! and Mustard-
 seed !

Enter PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and
MUSTARDSEED

Peas. Ready.

Cob. And I.

Moth. And I.

Mus. And I.

All. Where shall we go?

Tita. Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;
Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries; 170
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs.
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
To have my love to bed and to arise;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes:
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

Peas. Hail, mortal!

Cob. Hail!

Moth. Hail! 180

Mus. Hail!

Bot. I cry your worships mercy, heartily: I
beseech your worship's name.

Cob. Cobweb.

Bot. I shall desire you of more acquaintance,
good Master Cobweb: if I cut my finger, I shall
make bold with you. Your name, honest gentle-
man?

Peas. Peaseblossom.

Bot. I pray you, commend me to Mistress 190
Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your

father. Good Master Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too. Your name, I beseech you, sir?

Mus. Mustardseed.

Bot. Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well: that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house: I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire your more ac-200
quaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

Tita. Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower.

The moon methinks looks with a watery eye;
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some enforced chastity.

Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II — *Another part of the wood*

Enter OBERON

Obe. I wonder if Titania be awaked;
Then, what it was that next came in her eye,
Which she must dote on in extremity.

Enter PUCK

Here comes my messenger.

How now, mad spirit!

What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

Puck. My mistress with a monster is in love.
Near to her close and consecrated bower,
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,

That work for bread upon Athenian stalls, 10
Were met together to rehearse a play
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial-day.
The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,
Who Pyramus presented, in their sport
Forsook his scene and enter'd in a brake :
When I did him at this advantage take,
An ass's nolle I fixed on his head :
Anon his Thisbe must be answered,
And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye, 20
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly ;
And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls ;
He murder cries and help from Athens calls.
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus
strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong ;
For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch ;
Some sleeves, some hats, from yielders all things
catch. 30

I led them on in this distracted fear,
And left sweet Pyramus translated there:
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.

And the Athenian woman by his side;
That, when he waked, of force she must be eyed. 40

Enter HERMIA and DEMETRIUS

Obe. Stand close: this is the same Athenian.

Puck. This is the woman, but not this the man.

Dem. O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

Her. Now I but chide; but I should use thee
worse,

For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
And kill me too.

The sun was not so true unto the day 50
As he to me: would he have stolen away
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
This whole earth may be bored and that the moon
May through the centre creep and so displease
Her brother's noontide with the Antipodes.
It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him;
So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.

Dem. So should the murder'd look, and so
should I,

Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty:
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear, 60
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

Her. What's this to my Lysander? where is he?
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

Dem. I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

Her. Out, dog! out, cur! thou drivest me past
the bounds

Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then?
 Henceforth be never number'd among men!
 O, once tell true, tell true, even for my sake!
 Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,
 And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave touch! 70
 Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?
 An adder did it; for with doubler tongue
 Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

Dem. You spend your passion on a misprised
 mood:

I am not guilty of Lysander's blood;
 Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

Her. I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

Dem. An if I could, what should I get therefore?

Her. A privilege never to see me more.

And from thy hated presence part I so: 80
 See me no more, whether he be dead or no. [*Exit.*]

Dem. There is no following her in this fierce
 vein:

Here therefore for a while I will remain.
 So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow
 For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe;
 Which now in some slight measure it will pay,
 If for his tender here I make some stay.

[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

Obe. What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken
 quite

And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight:
 Of thy misprision must perforce ensue 90
 Some true love turn'd and not a false turn'd true.

Puck. Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man hold-
 ing troth,

A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

Obe. About the wood go swifter than the wind,
And Helena of Athens look thou find :
All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer,
With sighs of love, that cost the fresh blood
dear :

By some illusion see thou bring her here :
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

Puck. I go, I go ; look how I go, 100
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow. [*Exit.*

Obe. Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in apple of his eye.
When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.
When thou wakest, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

Re-enter PUCK

Puck. Captain of our fairy band, 110
Helena is here at hand ;
And the youth, mistook by me,
Pleading for a lover's fee.
Shall we their fond pageant see ?
Lord, what fools these mortals be !

Obe. Stand aside : the noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

Puck. Then will two at once woo one ;
That must needs be sport alone ;
And those things do best please me 120
That befall preposterously.

Enter LYSANDER and HELENA

Lys. Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?

Scorn and derision never come in tears :

Look, when I vow, I weep ; and vows so born,
In their nativity all truth appears.

How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith, to prove them true?

Hel. You do advance your cunning more and more.

When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray !

These vows are Hermia's : will you give her o'er ? ¹³⁰

Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh :

Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,
Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.

Lys. I had no judgement when to her I swore.

Hel. Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

Lys. Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

Dem. [*Awaking*] O Helen, goddess, nymph,
perfect, divine !

To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?

Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show

Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow ! ¹⁴⁰

That pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow,
Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow

When thou hold'st up thy hand : O, let me kiss

This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss !

Hel. O spite ! O hell ! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment :

If you were civil and knew courtesy,
 You would not do me thus much injury.
 Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
 But you must join in souls to mock me too? 150
 If you were men, as men you are in show,
 You would not use a gentle lady so;
 To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
 When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
 You both are rivals, and love Hermia;
 And now both rivals, to mock Helena:
 A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
 To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
 With your derision! none of noble sort
 Would so offend a virgin and extort 160
 A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

Lys. You are unkind, Demetrius; be not so;
 For you love Hermia; this you know I know:
 And here, with all good will, with all my heart,
 In Hermia's love I yield you up my part;
 And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
 Whom I do love and will do till my death.

Hel. Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

Dem. Lysander, keep thy Hermia; I will none:
 If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone. 170
 My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourn'd,
 And now to Helen is it home return'd,
 There to remain.

Lys. Helen, it is not so.

Dem. Disparage not the faith thou dost not
 know,
 Lest, to thy peril, thou aby it dear.
 Look, where thy love comes; yonder is thy dear.

Re-enter HERMIA

Her. Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,

The ear more quick of apprehension makes ;

Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,

It pays the hearing double recompense.

180

Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found ;

Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.

But why unkindly didst thou leave me so ?

Lys. Why should he stay, whom love doth press
to go ?

Her. What love could press Lysander from my
side ?

Lys. Lysander's love, that would not let him
bide.

Fair Helena, who more engilds the night

Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.

Why seek'st thou me ? could not this make thee
know,

The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so ?

190

Her. You speak not as you think : it cannot be.

Hel. Lo, she is one of this confederacy !

Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three

To fashion this false sport, in spite of me.

Injurious Hermia ! most ungrateful maid !

Have you conspired, have you with these contrived
To bait me with this foul derision ?

Is all the counsel that we two have shared,

The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,

When we have chid the hasty-footed time

200

For parting us, — O, is all forgot ?

All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence?
 We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
 Have with our needles created both one flower,
 Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
 Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
 As if our hands, our sides, voices and minds,
 Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
 Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
 But yet an union in partition ;
 Two lovely berries moulded on one stem ;
 So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart ;
 Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
 Due but to one and crowned with one crest.
 And will you rend our ancient love asunder,
 To join with men in scorning your poor friend ?
 It is not friendly, 't is not maidenly :
 Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
 Though I alone do feel the injury.

210

Her. I am amazed at your passionate words. 220
 I scorn you not : it seems that you scorn me.

Hel. Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
 To follow me and praise my eyes and face ?
 And made your other love, Demetrius,
 Who even but now did spurn me with his foot,
 To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,
 Precious, celestial ? Wherefore speaks he this
 To her he hates ? and wherefore doth Lysander
 Deny your love, so rich within his soul,
 And tender me, forsooth, affection,
 But by your setting on, by your consent ?
 What though I be not so in grace as you,
 So hung upon with love, so fortunate,

230

But miserable most, to love unloved?

This you should pity rather than despise.

Her. I understand not what you mean by this.

Hel. Ay, do, perséver, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back;
Wink each at other; hold the sweet jest up:
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled. 240

If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument.
But fare ye well: 't is partly my own fault;
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

Lys. Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse:
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!

Hel. O excellent!

Her. Sweet, do not scorn her so.

Dem. If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

Lys. Thou canst compel no more than she entreat:

Thy threats have no more strength than her weak
prayers. 250

Helen, I love thee; by my life, I do:

I swear by that which I will lose for thee,

To prove him false that says I love thee not.

Dem. I say I love thee more than he can do.

Lys. If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

Dem. Quick, come!

Her. Lysander, whereto tends all this?

Lys. Away, you Ethiope!

Her. No, no; he'll —

Dem. Seem to break loose! take on as you would
follow,

But yet come not! you are a tame man, go!

Lys. Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! vile thing,
let loose, 260

Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent!

Her. Why are you grown so rude? what change
is this?

Sweet love, —

Lys. Thy love! out, tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathed medicine! hated potion, hence!

Her. Do you not jest?

Hel. Yes, sooth; and so do you.

Lys. Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

Dem. I would I had your bond, for I perceive
A weak bond holds you: I'll not trust your word.

Lys. What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her
dead?

Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so. 270

Her. What, can you do me greater harm than
hate?

Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love!
Am not I Hermia? are not you Lysander?

I am as fair now as I was erewhile.

Since night you loved me; yet since night you left
me:

Why, then you left me — O, the gods forbid! —
In earnest, shall I say?

Lys. Ay, by my life;
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt;
Be certain, nothing truer; 't is no jest 280
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

Her. O me! you juggler! you canker-blossom!
You thief of love! what, have you come by night

And stolen my love's heart from him?

Hel.

Fine, i'faith!

Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet, you!

Her. Puppet? why so? ay, that way goes the
game.

Now I perceive that she hath made compare 290
Between our statures; she hath urged her height;
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem,
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

Hel. I pray you, though you mock me, gentle-
men,

Let her not hurt me: I was never curst; 300
I have no gift at all in shrewishness;
I am a right maid for my cowardice:
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her.

Her. Lower! hark, again.

Hel. Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you;
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your stealth unto this wood. 310
He follow'd you; for love I follow'd him;

But he hath chid me hence and threaten'd me
 To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too:
 And now, so you will let me quiet go,
 To Athens will I bear my folly back
 And follow you no further: let me go:
 You see how simple and how fond I am.

Her. Why, get you gone: who is't that hinders
 you?

Hel. A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

Her. What, with Lysander?

Hel. With Demetrius. 320

Lys. Be not afraid; she shall not harm thee,
 Helena.

Dem. No, sir, she shall not, though you take her
 part.

Hel. O, when she's angry, she is keen and
 shrewd!

She was a vixen when she went to school;
 And though she be but little, she is fierce.

Her. "Little" again! nothing but "low" and
 "little"!

Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
 Let me come to her.

Lys. Get you gone, you dwarf;
 You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;
 You bead, you acorn.

Dem. You are too officious 330
 On her behalf that scorns your services.
 Let her alone: speak not of Helena;
 Take not her part; for, if thou dost intend
 Never so little show of love to her,
 Thou shalt aby it.

Lys. Now she holds me not;
 Now follow, if thou darest, to try whose right,
 Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

Dem. Follow! nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by
 jole. [*Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius.*]

Her. You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you:
 Nay, go not back.

Hcl. I will not trust you, I, 340
 Nor longer stay in your curst company.
 Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,
 My legs are longer though, to run away. [*Exit.*]

Her. I am amazed, and know not what to say.
 [*Exit.*]

Obe. This is thy negligence: still thou mistakest,
 Or else committ'st thy knaveries wilfully.

Puck. Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.
 Did not you tell me I should know the man
 By the Athenian garments he had on?
 And so far blameless proves my enterprise, 350
 That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes;
 And so far am I glad it so did sort
 As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

Obe. Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to
 fight:

Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night;
 The starry welkin cover thou anon
 With drooping fog as black as Acheron,
 And lead these testy rivals so astray
 As one come not within another's way.
 Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue, 360
 Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong;
 And sometime rail thou like Demetrius;

And from each other look thou lead them thus,
 Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
 With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep :
 Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye ;
 Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,
 To take from thence all error with his might,
 And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.
 When they next wake, all this derision 370
 Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision,
 And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,
 With league whose date till death shall never end.
 Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
 I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy ;
 And then I will her charmed eye release
 From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

Puck. My fairy lord, this must be done with
 haste,

For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
 And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger ; 380
 At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and
 there,

Troop home to churchyards : damned spirits all,
 That in crossways and floods have burial,
 Already to their wormy beds are gone ;
 For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
 They wilfully themselves exile from light
 And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night.

Obe. But we are spirits of another sort :
 I with the morning's love have oft made sport,
 And, like a forester, the groves may tread, 390
 Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
 Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,

Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.
 But, notwithstanding, haste ; make no delay :
 We may effect this business yet ere day. [*Exit.*

Puck. Up and down, up and down,
 I will lead them up and down :
 I am fear'd in field and town :
 Goblin, lead them up and down.

Here comes one.

400

Re-enter LYSANDER

Lys. Where art thou, proud Demetrius? speak
 thou now.

Puck. Here, villain ; drawn and ready. Where
 art thou?

Lys. I will be with thee straight.

Puck. Follow me, then,
 To plainer ground.

[*Exit Lysander, as following the voice.*

Re-enter DEMETRIUS

Dem. Lysander ! speak again :
 Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled ?
 Speak ! In some bush ? Where dost thou hide thy
 head ?

Puck. Thou coward, art thou bragging to the
 stars,
 Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,
 And wilt not come ? Come, recreant ; come, thou
 child

I'll whip thee with a rod : he is defiled
 That draws a sword on thee.

410

Dem. Yea, art thou there ?

Puck. Follow my voice: we'll try no manhood
here. [Exeunt.]

Re-enter LYSANDER

Lys. He goes before me and still dares me on:
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.
The villain is much lighter-heel'd than I:
I follow'd fast, but faster he did fly;
That fallen am I in dark uneven way,
And here will rest me. [*Lies down.*] Come, thou
gentle day!
For if but once thou show me thy grey light,
I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite. [*Sleeps.* 420

Re-enter PUCK and DEMETRIUS

Puck. Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why comest thou
not?

Dem. Abide me, if thou darest; for well I wot
Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,
And darest not stand, nor look me in the face.
Where art thou now?

Puck. Come hither: I am here.

Dem. Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt
buy this dear,
If ever I thy face by daylight see:
Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me
To measure out my length on this cold bed.
By day's approach look to be visited. 430
[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

Re-enter HELENA

Hel. O weary night, O long and tedious night,
Abate thy hours! Shine comforts from the east,

That I may back to Athens by daylight,
 From these that my poor company detest :
 And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,
 Steal me awhile from mine own company.

[Lies down and sleeps.]

Puck. Yet but three? Come one more ;
 Two of both kinds makes up four.
 Here she comes, curst and sad :
 Cupid is a knavish lad, 440
 Thus to make poor females mad.

Re-enter HERMIA

Her. Never so weary, never so in woe,
 Bedabbled with the dew and torn with
 briers,
 I can no further crawl, no further go :
 My legs can keep no pace with my de-
 sires.
 Here will I rest me till the break of day.
 Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a
 fray ! *[Lies down and sleeps.]*

Puck. On the ground
 Sleep sound :
 I'll apply 450
 To your eye,
 Gentle lover, remedy.
[Squeezing the juice on Lysander's eyes.]
 When thou wakest,
 Thou takest
 True delight
 In the sight
 Of thy former lady's eye :

And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,
In your waking shall be shown :

460

Jack shall have Jill ;
Nought shall go ill ;

The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be
well. [Exit.

ACT IV

SCENE I — *The same.* LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS,
HELENA, and HERMIA *lying asleep*

Enter TITANIA and BOTTOM ; PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB,
MOTH, MUSTARDSEED, and other Fairies attending ;
OBERON *behind unseen*

Tita. Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth
head,
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle
joy.

Bot. Where's Peaseblossom ?

Peas. Ready.

Bot. Scratch my head, Peaseblossom. Where's
Mounsieur Cobweb ?

Cob. Ready.

Bot. Mounsieur Cobweb, good mounsieur, get 10
you your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-
hipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle ; and,
good mounsieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not
fret yourself too much in the action, mounsieur ;

and, good mounsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not; I would be loth to have you overflown with a honey-bag, signior. Where's Mounsieur Mustardseed?

Mus. Ready.

Bot. Give me your neaf, Mounsieur Mustard-20 seed. Pray you, leave your courtesy, good mounsieur.

Mus. What's your will?

Bot. Nothing, good mounsieur, but to help Cavalery Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, mounsieur; for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face; and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch.

Tita. What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

Bot. I have a reasonable good ear in music. 30 Let's have the tongs and the bones.

Tita. Or say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.

Bot. Truly, a peck of provender: I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

Tita. I have a venturous fairy that shall seek The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee new nuts.

Bot. I had rather have a handful or two of dried 40 peas. But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me: I have an exposition of sleep come upon me.

Tita. Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.

Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away.

[*Exeunt fairies.*]

So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist; the female ivy so
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee!

[*They sleep.*]

Enter PUCK

Obe. [*Advancing*] Welcome, good Robin.
See'st thou this sweet sight?

Her dotage now I do begin to pity : 50

For, meeting her of late behind the wood,
Seeking sweet favours for this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her and fall out with her;
For she his hairy temples then had rounded
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,
Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.

When I had at my pleasure taunted her 60

And she in mild terms begg'd my patience,
I then did ask of her her changeling child;
Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent
To bear him to my bower in fairy land.

And now I have the boy, I will undo
This hateful imperfection of her eyes :
And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp
From off the head of this Athenian swain;
That, he awaking when the other do,
May all to Athens back again repair 70
And think no more of this night's accidents
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
But first I will release the fairy queen.

Be as thou wast wont to be ;
 See as thou wast wont to see :
 Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower
 Hath such force and blessed power.

Now, my Titania ; wake you, my sweet queen.

Tita. My Oberon ! what visions have I seen !
 Methought I was enamour'd of an ass. 80

Obe. There lies your love.

Tita. How came these things to pass ?
 O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now !

Obe. Silence awhile. Robin, take off this head.
 Titania, music call ; and strike more dead
 Than common sleep of all these five the sense.

Tita. Music, ho ! music, such as charmeth sleep !
[*Music, still.*]

Puck. Now, when thou wakest, with thine own
 fool's eyes peep.

Obe. Sound, music ! Come, my queen, take
 hands with me,

And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be. 90

Now thou and I are new in amity
 And will to-morrow midnight solemnly
 Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly
 And bless it to all fair prosperity :
 There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be
 Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

Puck. Fairy king, attend, and mark :
 I do hear the morning lark.

Obe. Then, my queen, in silence sad,
 Trip we after night's shade : 100
 We the globe can compass soon,
 Swifter than the wandering moon.

Tita. Come, my lord, and in our flight
 Tell me how it came this night
 That I sleeping here was found
 With these mortals on the ground.
[Exeunt. Horns winded within.]

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and train

The. Go, one of you, find out the forester;
 For now our observation is perform'd;
 And since we have the vaward of the day,
 My love shall hear the music of my hounds. 110
 Uncouple in the western valley; let them go:
 Dispatch, I say, and find the forester.
[Exit an Attendant.]

We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top
 And mark the musical confusion
 Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

Hip. I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
 When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear
 With hounds of Sparta: never did I hear
 Such gallant chiding; for, besides the groves,
 The skies, the fountains, every region near 120
 Seem'd all one mutual cry: I never heard
 So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

The. My hounds are bred out of the Spartan
 kind,
 So flew'd, so sanded, and their heads are hung
 With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
 Crook-knee'd, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls;
 Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,
 Each under each. A cry more tuneable
 Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,

In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly :
 Judge when you hear. But, soft ! what nymphs are
 these? 130

Ege. My lord, this is my daughter here asleep ;
 And this, Lysander ; this Demetrius is ;
 This Helena, old Nedar's Helena :
 I wonder of their being here together.

The. No doubt they rose up early to observe
 The rite of May, and, hearing our intent,
 Came here in grace of our solemnity.
 But speak, Egeus ; is not this the day
 That Hermia should give answer of her choice? 140

Ege. It is, my lord.

The. Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with
 their horns. [*Horns and shout within.*
Lys., Dem., Hel., and Her., wake and start
up.

Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past :
 Begin these wood-birds but to couple now?

Lys. Pardon, my lord.

The. I pray you all, stand up.
 I know you two are rival enemies :
 How comes this gentle concord in the world,
 That hatred is so far from jealousy,
 To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?

Lys. My lord, I shall reply amazedly, 150
 Half sleep, half waking : but as yet, I swear,
 I cannot truly say how I came here ;
 But, as I think, — for truly would I speak,
 And now I do bethink me, so it is, —
 I came with Hermia hither : our intent
 Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,

Without the peril of the Athenian law.

Ege. Enough, enough, my lord: you have
enough:

I beg the law, the law, upon his head.

They would have stolen away; they would,

Demetrius,

160

Thereby to have defeated you and me,

You of your wife and me of my consent,

Of my consent that she should be your wife.

Dem. My lord, fair Helen told me of their
stealth,

Of this their purpose hither to this wood;

And I in fury hither follow'd them,

Fair Helena in fancy following me.

But, my good lord, I wot not by what power, —

But by some power it is, — my love to Hermia,

Melted as the snow, seems to me now

170

As the remembrance of an idle gawd

Which in my childhood I did dote upon;

And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,

The object and the pleasure of mine eye,

Is only Helena. To her, my lord,

Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia:

But, like a sickness, did I loathe this food;

But, as in health, come to my natural taste.

Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,

And will for evermore be true to it.

180

The. Fair lovers, you are fortunately met:

Of this discourse we more will hear anon.

Egeus, I will overbear your will;

For in the temple, by and by, with us

These couples shall eternally be knit:

And, for the morning now is something worn,
Our purposed hunting shall be set aside.

Away with us to Athens; three and three,
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.

Come, Hippolyta.

190

[Exeunt The., Hip., Ege., and train.]

Dem. These things seem small and undistinguishable,

Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.

Her. Methinks I see these things with parted eye,

When every thing seems double.

Hel.

So methinks:

And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,

Mine own, and not mine own.

Dem.

Are you sure

That we are awake? It seems to me

That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think

The duke was here, and bid us follow him?

Her. Yea; and my father.

Hel.

And Hippolyta.

200

Lys. And he did bid us follow to the temple.

Dem. Why, then, we are awake: let's follow him:

And by the way let us recount our dreams. *[Exeunt.]*

Bot. *[Awaking]* When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer: my next is, "Most fair Pyramus." Heigh-ho! Peter Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender! Snout, the tinker! Starveling! God's my life, stolen hence, and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: 210

man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was — there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, — and methought I had, — but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's²²⁰ Dream, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the duke: peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death. *[Exit.]*

SCENE II — *Athens. QUINCE's house*

Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING

Quin. Have you sent to Bottom's house? is he come home yet?

Star. He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is transported.

Flu. If he come not, then the play is marred: it goes not forward, doth it?

Quin. It is not possible: you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

Flu. No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens. 10

Quin. Yea, and the best person too; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

Flu. You must say "paragon:" a paramour is, God bless us, a thing of naught.

Enter SNUG

Snug. Masters, the duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married: if our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.

Flu. O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life; he could not have 20 'scaped sixpence a day: an the duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged; he would have deserved it: sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing.

Enter BOTTOM

Bot. Where are these lads? where are these hearts?

Quin. Bottom! O most courageous day! O most happy hour!

Bot. Masters, I am to discourse wonders: but ask me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true 30 Athenian. I will tell you every thing, right as it fell out.

Quin. Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

Bot. Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, that the duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps; meet presently at the palace; every man look o'er his part; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisby have clean linen; and not let him that 40 plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors,

eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath; and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words: away! go, away! [*Exeunt.*

ACT V

SCENE I — *Athens. The palace of THESEUS*

*Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, Lords,
and Attendants*

Hip. 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

The. More strange than true: I never may believe

These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact:
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic, 10
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to
heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination,

That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
 It comprehends some bringer of that joy; 20
 Or in the night, imagining some fear,
 How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

Hip. But all the story of the night told over,
 And all their minds transfigured so together,
 More witnesseth than fancy's images
 And grows to something of great constancy;
 But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

The. Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.

Enter LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, and HELENA

Joy, gentle friends! joy and fresh days of love
 Accompany your hearts!

Lys. More than to us 30
 Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!

The. Come now; what masques, what dances
 shall we have,

To wear away this long age of three hours
 Between our after-supper and bed-time?
 Where is our usual manager of mirth?
 What revels are in hand? Is there no play,
 To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?
 Call Philostrate.

Phil. Here, mighty Theseus.

The. Say, what abridgement have you for this
 evening? *ph*

What masque? what music? How shall we beguile 40
 The lazy time, if not with some delight?

Phil. There is a brief how many sports are ripe:
 Make choice of which your highness will see first.

[Giving a paper.]

The. [*Reads*] "The battle with the Centaurs, to
be sung

By an Athenian eunuch to the harp."

We'll none of that: that have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.

[*Reads*] "The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage."

That is an old device; and it was play'd 50
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.

[*Reads*] "The thrice three Muses mourning for
the death

Of Learning, late deceased in beggary."

That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.

[*Reads*] "A tedious brief scene of young Py-
ramus

And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth."

Merry and tragical! tedious and brief!

That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow.

How shall we find the concord of this discord? 60

Phil. A play there is, my lord, some ten words
long,

Which is as brief as I have known a play;

But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,

Which makes it tedious; for in all the play

There is not one word apt, one player fitted:

And tragical, my noble lord, it is;

For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.

Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,

Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears

The passion of loud laughter never shed. 70

The. What are they that do play it?

Phil. Hard-handed men that work in Athens
here,

Which never labour'd in their minds till now,
And now have toil'd their unbreathed memories
With this same play, against your nuptial.

The. And we will hear it.

Phil. No, my noble lord ;

It is not for you : I have heard it over,
And it is nothing, nothing in the world ;
Unless you can find sport in their intents,
Extremely stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain, 80
To do you service.

The. I will hear that play ;

For never anything can be amiss,
When simpleness and duty tender it.
Go, bring them in : and take your places, ladies.

[*Exit Philostrate.*]

Hip. I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged
And duty in his service perishing.

The. Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such
thing.

Hip. He says they can do nothing in this kind.

The. The kinder we, to give them thanks for
nothing.

Our sport shall be to take what they mistake : 90
And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect
Takes it in might, not merit.

Where I have come, great clerks have purposed
To greet me with premeditated welcomes ;
Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
Make periods in the midst of sentences,
Throttle their practised accent in their fears

And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,
 Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,
 Out of this silence yet I pick'd a welcome ; 100
 And in the modesty of fearful duty
 I read as much as from the rattling tongue
 Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
 Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
 In least speak most, to my capacity.

Re-enter PHILOSTRATE

Phil. So please your grace, the Prologue is
 address'd.

The. Let him approach. [*Flourish of trumpets.*]

Enter QUINCE for the Prologue

Pro. If we offend, it is with our good will.

That you should think, we come not to offend,
 But with good will. To show our simple skill, 110
 That is the true beginning of our end.

Consider then we come but in despite.

We do not come as minding to content you,
 Our true intent is. All for your delight

We are not here. That you should here repent
 you,

The actors are at hand and by their show
 You shall know all that you are like to know.

The. This fellow doth not stand upon points.

Lys. He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt ;
 he knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord : 120
 it is not enough to speak, but to speak true.

Hip. Indeed he hath played on his prologue like a
 child on a recorder ; a sound, but not in government.

The. His speech was like a tangled chain;
nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

*Enter PYRAMUS and THISBE, WALL, MOONSHINE,
and LION*

Pro. Gentles, perchance you wonder at this
show;

But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.
This man is Pyramus, if you would know; 130
This beauteous lady Thisby is certain.

This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present
Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers
sunder;

And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are con-
tent

To whisper. At the which let no man wonder.
This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,
Presenteth Moonshine; for, if you will know,
By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn
To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.
This grisly beast, which Lion hight by name, 140
The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,
Did scare away, or rather did affright;

And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,
Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.

Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,
And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain:
Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast;
And Thisby, tarrying in mulberry shade,

His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest, 150
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain

At large discourse, while here they do remain.

[*Exeunt Prologue, Pyramus, Thisbe, Lion,
and Moonshine.*]

The. I wonder if the lion be to speak.

Dem. No wonder, my lord : one lion may, when many asses do.

Wall. In this same interlude it doth befall
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall ;
And such a wall, as I would have you think,
That had in it a crannied hole or chink,
Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisby, 160
Did whisper often very secretly.

This loam, this rough-cast and this stone doth show
That I am that same wall ; the truth is so :
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

The. Would you desire lime and hair to speak better ?

Dem. It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse, my lord.

Re-enter PYRAMUS

The. Pyramus draws near the wall : silence ! 170

Pyr. O grim-look'd night ! O night with hue so black !

O night, which ever art when day is not !

O night, O night ! alack, alack, alack,

I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot !

And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,

That stand'st between her father's ground and mine !

Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,

Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine
 eyne! *[Wall holds up his fingers.*

Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well for
 this!

But what see I? No Thisby do I see. 180

O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss!

Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

The. The wall, methinks, being sensible, should
 curse again.

Pyr. No, in truth, sir, he should not. "De-
 ceiving me" is Thisby's cue: she is to enter now,
 and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall
 see, it will fall pat as I told you. Yonder she
 comes.

Re-enter THISBE

This. O wall, full often hast thou heard my
 moans, 190

For parting my fair Pyramus and me!
 My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,
 Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.

Pyr. I see a voice: now will I to the chink,
 To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face.

Thisby!

This. My love thou art, my love I think.

Pyr. Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's
 grace;

And, like Limander, am I trusty still.

This. And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill. 200

Pyr. Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.

This. As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

Pyr. O, kiss me through the hole of this vile
 wall!

This. I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.

Pyr. Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

This. 'Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay. *[Exeunt Pyramus and Thisbe.]*

Wall. Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so; And, being done, thus Wall away doth go. *[Exit.]*

The. Now is the mural down between the two neighbours.

Dem. No remedy, my lord, when walls are so wilful to hear without warning.

Hip. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

The. The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

Hip. It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

The. If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion. 220

Re-enter LION and MOONSHINE

Lion. You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear

The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,

May now perchance both quake and tremble here,

When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.

Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am

A lion-fell, nor else no lion's dam;

For, if I should as lion come in strife

Into this place, 't were pity on my life.

The. A very gentle beast, and of a good con- 230
science.

Dem. The very best at a beast, my lord, that
e'er I saw.

Lys. This lion is a very fox for his valour.

The. True; and a goose for his discretion.

Dem. Not so, my lord; for his valour cannot
carry his discretion; and the fox carries the
goose.

The. His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his
valour; for the goose carries not the fox. It is 240
well: leave it to his discretion, and let us listen to
the moon.

Moon. This lanthorn doth the horned moon
present; —

Dem. He should have worn the horns on his
head.

The. He is no crescent, and his horns are in-
visible within the circumference.

Moon. This lanthorn doth the horned moon
present;

Myself the man i' the moon do seem to be.

The. This is the greatest error of all the rest: 250
the man should be put into the lanthorn. How
is it else the man i' the moon?

Dem. He dares not come there for the candle;
for, you see, it is already in snuff.

Hip. I am awearry of this moon: would he
would change!

The. It appears, by his small light of discretion,
that he is in the wane; but yet, in courtesy, in all
reason, we must stay the time.

Lys. Proceed, Moon.

260

Moon. All that I have to say, is, to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon; I, the man in the moon; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush; and this dog, my dog.

Dem. Why, all these should be in the lanthorn; for all these are in the moon. But, silence! here comes Thisbe.

Re-enter THISBE

This. This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love?

Lion. [Roaring] Oh —— [Thisbe runs off.]

Dem. Well roared, Lion.

270

The. Well run, Thisbe.

Hip. Well shone, Moon. Truly, the moon shines with a good grace.

[The Lion shakes Thisbe's mantle, and exit.]

The. Well moused, Lion.

Lys. And so the lion vanished.

Dem. And then came Pyramus.

Re-enter PYRAMUS

Pyr. Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams;

I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright;
For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,
I trust to take of truest Thisby sight.

280

But stay, O spite!

But mark, poor knight,

What dreadful dole is here!

Eyes, do you see?

How can it be?

O dainty duck! O dear!
 Thy mantle good,
 What, stain'd with blood!

Approach, ye Furies fell!

O Fates, come, come,

290

Cut thread and thrum;

Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

The. This passion, and the death of a dear friend, would go near to make a man look sad.

Hip. Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

Pyr. O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?

Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear:
 Which is — no, no — which was the fairest dame
 That lived, that loved, that liked, that look'd
 with cheer.

Come, tears, confound;

300

Out, sword, and wound

The pap of Pyramus;

Ay, that left pap,

Where heart doth hop: [*Stabs himself.*

Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.

Now am I dead,

Now am I fled;

My soul is in the sky:

Tongue, lose thy light;

Moon, take thy flight: [*Exit Moonshine.* 310

Now die, die, die, die, die. [*Dies.*

Dem. No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but one.

Lys. Less than an ace, man; for he is dead; he is nothing.

The. With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover, and prove an ass.

Hip. How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?

The. She will find him by starlight. Here she 320 comes; and her passion ends the play.

Re-enter THISBE

Hip. Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus: I hope she will be brief.

Dem. A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better; he for a man, God warrant us; she for a woman, God bless us.

Lys. She has spied him already with those sweet eyes.

Dem. And thus she means, videlicet: — 330

This. Asleep, my love?

What, dead, my dove?

O Pyramus, arise!

Speak, speak. Quite dumb?

Dead, dead? A tomb

Must cover thy sweet eyes.

These lily lips

This cherry nose,

These yellow cowslip cheeks,

Are gone, are gone: 340

Lovers, make moan:

His eyes were green as leeks.

O Sisters three,

Come, come to me,

With hands as pale as milk ;
 Lay them in gore,
 Since you have shore
 With shears his thread of silk.
 Tongue, not a word :
 Come, trusty sword ;
 Come, blade, my breast imbrue :

350

[*Stabs herself.*

And, farewell, friends ;

Thus Thisby ends :

Adieu, adieu, adieu.

[*Dies.*

The. Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

Dem. Ay, and Wall too.

Bot. [*Starting up*] No, I assure you ; the wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance 360 between two of our company ?

The. No epilogue, I pray you ; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse ; for when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy : and so it is, truly ; and very notably discharged. But, come, your Bergomask : let your epilogue alone. [*A dance.*

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve : 370
 Lovers, to bed ; 't is almost fairy time.

I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn

As much as we this night have overwatch'd.

This palpable-gross play hath well beguiled

The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.

A fortnight hold we this solemnity.

In nightly revels and new jollity. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter PUCK

Puck. Now the hungry lion roars,
 And the wolf behowls the moon ;
 Whilst the heavy ploughman snores, 380
 All with weary task fordone.
 Now the wasted brands do glow,
 Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
 Puts the wretch that lies in woe
 In remembrance of a shroud.
 Now it is the time of night
 That the graves all gaping wide,
 Every one lets forth his sprite,
 In the church-way paths to glide :
 And we fairies, that do run 390
 By the triple Hecate's team,
 From the presence of the sun,
 Following darkness like a dream,
 Now are frolic : not a mouse
 Shall disturb this hallow'd house :
 I am sent with broom before,
 To sweep the dust behind the door.

Enter OBERON *and* TITANIA *with their train*

Obe. Through the house give glimmering light,
 By the dead and drowsy fire :
 Every elf and fairy sprite 400
 Hop as light as bird from brier ;
 And this ditty, after me,
 Sing, and dance it trippingly.

Tita. First, rehearse your song by rote,
 To each word a warbling note :
 Hand in hand, with fairy grace,
 Will we sing, and bless this place.

[*Song and dance.*

Obe. Now, until the break of day,
 Through this house each fairy stray.
 To the best bride-bed will we,
 Which by us shall blessed be ;
 And the issue there create
 Ever shall be fortunate.
 So shall all the couples three
 Ever true in loving be ;
 And the blots of Nature's hand
 Shall not in their issue stand ;
 Never mole, hare lip, nor scar,
 Nor mark prodigious, such as are
 Despised in nativity,
 Shall upon their children be.
 With this field-dew consecrate,
 Every fairy take his gait ;
 And each several chamber bless,
 Through this palace, with sweet peace ;
 And the owner of it blest
 Ever shall in safety rest.
 Trip away ; make no stay ;
 Meet me all by break of day.

410

420

[*Exeunt Oberon, Titania, and train.*

Puck. If we shadows have offended,
 Think but this, and all is mended,
 That you have but slumber'd here
 While these visions did appear.

430

And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend :
If you pardon, we will mend :
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearned luck
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue, 440
We will make amends ere long ;
Else the Puck a liar call :
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends. [*Exit.*

NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbott	Abbott's <i>Shakespearian Grammar</i> , 3d edition.
F 1 or F	First Folio (1623) of Shakespeare's plays.
F 2	Second Folio (1632).
F 3	Third Folio (1663 and 1664).
F 4	Fourth Folio (1685).
Ff	The four Folios.
Qq	The two Quartos (both dated 1600).
Cent. Dict. . . .	<i>The Century Dictionary</i> .
New Eng. Dict. .	<i>A New English Dictionary</i> , ed. Sir J. A. H. Murray and others, published by the Oxford University Press.

For the meaning of words not given in these notes, the student is referred to the Glossary at the end of the volume.

The numbering of the lines corresponds to that of the Globe Edition; this applies also to the scenes in prose.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

The early editions have no list of characters. The first editor to supply one was Rowe. The origin of the names is as follows:

Theseus, *Egeus*, and *Hippolyta* are found in North's translation of Plutarch (*Life of Theseus*), and in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*.

Lysander and *Demetrius* are found elsewhere in North's Plutarch, and *Emetrius*, undoubtedly from *Demetrius* by some scribe's omission of a capital D, is also in the *Knight's Tale*.

Hermia (a mistake for the Greek *Hermias*) and *Helena* have not been traced to any particular source.

Philostrate comes from the *Knight's Tale*.

Oberon is found in Greene's *James IV*, Spenser's *Faërie Queene*, and elsewhere. Shakespeare's immediate source is uncertain.

Titania is found several times in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

Robin Goodfellow or *Puck* comes from English popular fairy lore. Shakespeare may have reënforced his own knowledge from Reginald Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft*, which he is believed on other grounds to have used.

The names of the "mechanicals" are probably bestowed in imitation of the names used in early farce. *Bottom* means the reel of thread used by a weaver. *Snug* refers to the joiner's trade. *Quince* may refer to the hard, rough-skinned, knobby appearance of the carpenter's face; or possibly quince wood was used in the trade and had comic associations now lost. *Flute* may be a joke on the bellows as a wind instrument, and at the same time give a cue to the desirability of a lanky, shrill-voiced actor for the part. *Snout* may allude to the spout of a kettle, and also to the traditional tinker's red nose. *Starveling* suggests the traditional contempt for a tailor as only the ninth part of a man. The six names certainly imply six very different physical types.

Time. There is some confusion as to this. In i. 1. 2 it is said that four days and nights will precede the wedding. The plot should therefore cover five days in all; actually it covers three. The lovers (i. 1. 164) and the actors (i. 2. 103) both arrange to meet in the wood "to-morrow night." Act ii, therefore, is on the day after the opening scene, and the action extends through the night of that day until morning breaks in iv. 1. 98, and we find (iv. 1. 139) that it is already the wedding-day. This is the third day. Act iv, sc. 2 is in the same afternoon (iv. 2. 16), and Act v in the evening after supper (v. 1. 34).

Another difficulty is presented by the moon. The wedding-day is the first of May (iv. 1. 137): it is also the day of a new moon (i. 1. 3, 10). Now, a new moon sets almost with the sun; and yet there is moon enough for the rehearsal (i. 2. 104), and it will even shine in at the casement of the great chamber window for the performance (iii. 1. 59).

There is no division into Acts and Scenes in Qq; F 1 gives the Acts, but not the Scenes.

ACT I — SCENE 1

The function of the first Act is twofold: (a) to inform us of the situation of the characters before the action begins; and (b) to start the threads of that action which are to be entangled and unraveled in the working out of the plot.

From ll. 1-19 of the opening scene we learn that Theseus has brought his bride to Athens, and that they are to be wedded in four days' time. This Theseus story, though perfectly simple in itself, is what has been called the "enveloping action" of the play. All the other stories depend upon and are held together by this. It is at the wedding that Hermia's fate must be decided; it is for the wedding that Bottom and his fellows are preparing their interlude; it is to honor the wedding that Oberon and Titania have traveled, unknown to each other, from the Far East.

The next part of the scene (ll. 20-127) puts before us the story of the lovers. Hermia loves Lysander, who loves her; but Hermia's father Egeus would wed her to Demetrius, who has already played false to her friend, Helena (ll. 106-110). Theseus warns Hermia that she must make up her mind to obey her father, and must give her answer on the day of his nuptials.

Finally, in ll. 128-251, the real action of this story begins with the bold determination of the lovers to fly from Athens, and the resolve of Helena to win Demetrius to follow them.

1-19. Note that, although the turbulence of Theseus' youth is now over, the central idea of the play — the lawlessness of love — has had its illustration in his life also. He has woo'd Hippolyta with his sword, and won her love, doing her injuries. Now his period of *Sturm und Drang* is past, and he has come out of it the serene and strong king.

2. *four . . . days*. See note on *Time*, p. 82.

4. *lingers*, in the causative sense of *makes to linger, checks*. Cf. *Richard II*, ii. 2. 70-72:

"A parasite, a keeper back of death,
Who gently would dissolve the bands of life,
Which false hope lingers in extremity."

Abbott, § 291, gives a list of several verbs thus used by Shakespeare in a rarer transitive as well as a commoner intransitive sense.

5. Theseus, waiting for his promised bride, feels like a young man held back from the full enjoyment of his revenue by the necessity of paying part of it to his father's widow until her death. See Glossary, s. v. *Dowager*. Horace, *Epist.* i. 1. 21-23:

"ut piger annus
Pupillis, quos dura premit custodia matrum,
Sic mihi tarda fluunt ingrataque tempora;"

thus translated by Drant (1567):

“Slow seems the year unto the ward,
Which holden down must be,
In custody of stepdame strait, —
Slow slides the time to me.”

Cf. also *Merry Wives of Windsor*, i. 1. 284: “I keep but three men and a boy yet, till my mother be dead.”

6. *revenue*. Here accented *révenue*; in line 158, *revénue*. See Appendix H, § 15.

8. *Four nights*. So Q 1 Ff; Q 2 *Four daies*.

10. *New-bent*. This is Rowe's very tempting emendation for the *Now bent* of the Qq Ff.

11. *Phil-o-strâte*, as the metre shows.

15. *companion*, often used by Shakespeare in a depreciatory sense, as we use *fellow*.

16. *I woo'd thee with my sword*. Cf. Chaucer, *Knight's Tale*, 1-12:

“Whylom, as olde stories tellen us,
Ther was a duk that highte Theseus;
Of Athenes he was lord and governour,
And in his tyme swich a conquerour,
That gretter was ther noon under the sonne.
Ful many a riche contree hadde he wonne;
What with his wisdom and his chivalrye
He conquered al the regne of Femenye,
That whylom was y-cleped Scithia;
And weddede the quene Ipolita,
And broghte hir hoom with him in his contree,
With muchel glorie and greet solempnitee.”

Perhaps *duke* (l. 20) and *solemnities* (l. 11) are reminiscences of this passage.

19. *triumph*, a public festivity or procession.

20-127. This part of the scene closely resembles in structure the opening of *The Comedy of Errors*, where Ægeon is brought before the Duke, and is respited until the end of the play. *The Comedy of Errors* is slightly earlier in date than *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

20. *Theseus*. Pronounce *Thé-sooce* except in ii. 1. 76 and v. 1. 38.

21. *Egeus*. Pronounce *E-gé-us*.

24, 26. *Stand forth, Demetrius . . . Stand forth, Lysander*.

Printed as stage directions in Qq Ff; but the scansion shows that they are really part of the text.

27. Scan:

"This man' 'th | be witched' | the bos' | om of' | my child'."

Such auxiliary forms as *hath*, *have*, *has*, *hast* are frequently merged in this way with a preceding pronoun. See König, p. 56, and Appendix H, § 15 (3).

31. *feigning* . . . *feigning*. This is Rowe's spelling, but Qq Ff have *faining* . . . *faining*, which Furness would retain in the sense of *yearning*. But I think *feigning* better suits the *stolen*, *cunning*, and *filched*, which follow in Egeus' indictment. The antithesis is characteristic of Shakespeare's early style. Cf. Introduction, p. vii. For the idea, cf. *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act iv, sc. 2, where •
Thurio and Proteus serenade Silvia at her chamber window.

32. Imprinted thyself by stealth upon her fancy. *Fantasy* often has the special sense of *love-fancy*. See Glossary.

39. *Be it so*, a conditional clause = if it be so. Cf. Abbott, § 133.

45. *Immediately*, expressly.

54. *in this kind*, *i.e.* not as a man, but as a husband.

69. Scan:

"Whether, if' | you yield' | not to' | your fa' | ther's choice'."

Whether is metrically equivalent to a single syllable. See König, p. 32, and Appendix H, § 15 (6).

70. *the livery of a nun*. A nun in the Athens of Theseus is something of an anachronism. But in classical antiquity there were votaresses, women vowed to a single life, as, for example, the Vestal Virgins in Rome. Cf. ll. 89-90, and 121, where Hermia has to choose between Demetrius and life-long service to Diana as such a votaress; cf. also ii. 1. 123. North in his *Life of Theseus* also uses *nun* as the equivalent for such a priestess. Cf. Appendix C.

76. *earthlier happy*, happier on earth. The phrase is really the comparative of the compound adjective *earthly-happy*.

The idea that the rose which is distilled into scent is more fortunate than that which dies upon the tree may be variously illustrated. Thus, from the *Colloquium Proci et Puellae* of Erasmus: "Ego rosam existimo feliciorem, quae marcescit in hominis manu, delectans interim et oculos et nares, quam quae senescit in frutice." And from Lyly, *Midas*, Act ii, sc. 1: "You bee all young, and faire, endeavour all to bee wise and vertuous; that when, like roses, you

shall fall from the stalke, you may be gathered, and put to the still." And from Shakespeare's own Sonnet 54, of canker-blooms, which

"Die to themselves; sweet roses do not so;
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made."

Cf. also Sonnet 5. The comparison of Beauty to a rose, which should be plucked before it fades, has of course been a commonplace of the poets, from Ausonius to Herrick.

80. *virgin patent*, patent, or privilege, of virginity. A *patent* (*lettres patentes*, open letters) is a letter under the royal seal, conferring a certain privilege upon the holder. Almost any relation between two substantive ideas can be expressed in Elizabethan English by making one of them an adjective of the other.

• 83. *the next new moon*. Cf. the note on the *Time* of the Play, p. 82.

88. *as he would*. *He* is Egeus, not Demetrius.

92. *Crazed* should be understood as not *mad*, but *cracked*, *flawed*: cf. Lyly, *Euphues* (ed. Arber), p. 58:

"the glass once crased, will with the least clap be cracked."

98. *estate*, a verb = bestow. It occurs again in *The Tempest*, iv. 1. 85; *As You Like It*, v. 2. 13. Elizabethan English allows considerable freedom in the formation of verbs out of substantives. Cf. *versing* (ii. 1. 67), *childing* (ii. 1. 112), and see Abbott, § 290.

99. *as well derived*, derived of as good ancestors.

113. *self-affairs*, my own affairs. Originally *self* was an adjective, meaning *same* (connected with German *selbe*), and was added to a repeated pronoun to identify it with that which went before. Thus "He killed himself" = "He killed him" (the *same* him). In time *self* acquired the meaning of "one's own self," and in compounds may denote *any* reference to oneself.

120. *extenuate*, weaken, *i.e.* by not enforcing them.

122. Theseus has been obliged to turn for a moment from his "self-affairs" to the affairs of state. Hoppolyta has stood by, waiting until her lover shall be again free to give her his attention. Theseus would not have her think herself neglected. So he whispers a tender word as he leads her from the presence-chamber.

123-126. Theseus' commands to Egeus and Demetrius to accompany him have no significance in the story; they are only the playwright's rather crude device to clear the stage for Lysander and Hermia.

This is one of the characteristically lyrical passages of the play. The lovers chant the eternal commonplaces of passion, not inappropriate to their situation, because it is in just such moments of personal emotion that what has been known as truism becomes recognized as truth; but the scene delays rather than helps the action.

The lyrical dialogue, voice answering voice in a kind of antiphon, in ll. 135-140 and ll. 194-201, takes the extreme form of *stichomuthia* or alternating lines. Cf. Appendix H, § 20.

132-149. Compare with Lysander's complaint that of Adam in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, x, 898-906:

“ For either
He never shall find out fit mate, but such
As some misfortune brings him, or mistake;
Or whom he wishes most shall seldom gain
Through her perverseness, but shall see her gain'd
By a far worse; or, if she love, withheld
By parents; or his happiest choice too late
Shall meet, already link'd and wedlock bound
To a fell adversary, his hate or shame.”

133. tale or history. Probably Shakespeare has in his mind such famous collections of stories of women as Ovid's *Heroïdes*, Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus*, Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, and Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. In Chaucer's poem occurs, among other legends, that of Thisbe of Babylon. See Introduction, p. xii, and Appendix D.

135. The grammatical construction is rather vague. *It* appears to refer somewhat generally to the whole imagined situation.

136. low is Theobald's emendation for the *love* of Qq Ff. The change makes Hermia's echo of Lysander's complaint much more pointed and direct. Cf. *Venus and Adonis*, ll. 1136-1140:

“ Sorrow on love hereafter shall attend:
It shall be waited on with jealousy,
Find sweet beginning, but unsavoury end,
Ne'er settled equally, but high or low,
That all love's pleasure shall not match his woe.”

139. friends. So Qq; Ff have *merit*.

143. momentary. So Qq; Ff have the more usual form *momentarie*. See Glossary.

144. Swift as a shadow, that is, the shadow of a cloud.

145-149. This splendid metaphor illustrates not only the brief span of love, but also its power to enlarge and purify the vision. Even as the lightning, it "unfolds both heaven and earth," presents both the spiritual and the material world under new aspects to the lover.

146. *in a spleen*, in a rage.

147. Cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, ii. 2. 117:

"I have no joy of this contract to-night:
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden;
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
Ere one can say 'It lightens.'"

149. Note the pathos of the final line, moving slowly and dying away without a stress:

"So' quick' bright' things come' to confu' sion."

Quick is here an adverb.

150. *ever*, always, constantly.

151. Note the accent, *edi'ct*, and see Appendix H, § 15.

152. *teach our trial patience*. One of the compressed phrases which became more and more characteristic of Shakespeare. The full sense is "teach ourselves patience to endure our trial."

158. *revénue*. See note on l. 6.

159. *remote*. So Qq; Ff have *remou'd*.

160. *respects*, looks upon.

164. *forth thy father's house*. Shakespeare often omits the preposition *from* after verbs of motion. Cf. Abbott, § 198. It is suggested, however, in Abbott, § 156, that *forth*, from being constantly used in such phrases as *forth from*, *forth of*, came in time to have a prepositional sense itself.

164. *to-morrow night*. See note on the *Time* of the Play, p. 82.

165. *the wood, a league without the town*. Cf. i. 2. 103, "the palace wood, a mile without the town." Halliwell notes that the length of the league was variously estimated. In Holland's translation of Ammianus Marcellinus it is reckoned as a mile and a half.

167. The morning following the "morrow" was to be once more the first of May, and therefore Hermia's early departure would not cause suspicion. Cf. iv. 1. 136, where Theseus says:

"No doubt they rose up early to observe
The rite of May."

Shakespeare has in his mind Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, 642, "And, for to doon his observaunce to May," which is also followed in *Two Noble Kinsmen*, ii. 4. 64-66:

" You must be ready,
To-morrow by the sun, to do observaunce
To flow'ry May, in Dian's wood."

The phrase recurs in Chaucer's *Troilus and Creseide*, ii. 112, "And lat us don to May som observaunce." The superstitions connected with May-day are perhaps the most living part of English folklore. A full account of them is given in Brand, *Popular Antiquities*, vol. i, pp. 212-234; and their primitive significance is discussed in Frazer's *Golden Bough*, i. 72-86. See also Herrick's charming poem, *Corinna's Going a Maying*, and Stow's *Survey of London* (ed. 1908), I, 88-89.

170. *the golden head*. According to the classical legend, Cupid had sharp golden arrows to inspire happy loves, blunt leaden arrows for the hapless ones. Shakespeare may have got the notion from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, i. 468-471:

" Eque sagittifera promsit duo tela pharetra
Diversorum operum: fugat hoc facit illud amorem,
Quod facit, auratum est et cuspide fulget acuta;
Quod fugat, obtusum est et habet sub arundine plumbum."

It was thus Englished by Arthur Golding (ed. 1587), ll. 565-568:

" There from his quiver full of shafts two arrows did he take
Of sundry powers; t'one causeth love, the t'other doth it slake.
That causeth love is all of gold, with point full sharp and bright,
That chaseth love is blunt, whose steel with leaden head is dight."

Cf. *Twelfth Night*, i. 1. 35:

" How will she love, when the rich golden shaft
Hath kill'd the flock of all affections else
That live in her."

171. *the simplicity of Venus' doves*. The doves of Venus are familiar to classical mythology, but Shakespeare, like a true child of the Renaissance, has given them a meaning taken from quite another source: "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

172. The allusion in this line is probably to the *cestus* or girdle of Venus.

173. The story of Æneas and Dido seems to have impressed Shakespeare's imagination more than any other classical legend, if we may judge by the frequency of his allusions to it.

180. The introduction of Helena does not alter the tone of the scene. She takes her share in the utterance of lyrical love-sentiments; but her resolve to follow the lovers, with Demetrius, serves as a second step in the thickening of the plot.

182. *your fair*. So Qq; the Ff have *you fair*. For *fair* as a substantive, see *As You Like It*, iii. 2. 99-100:

“ Let no fair be kept in mind
But the fair of Rosalind.”

183. *tongue's sweet air*, music of your speech.

187. *Yours would I catch*. This is Hanmer's probable emendation for the *your words I catch* of the Qq; *your words I do catch* of the Ff.

191-192. If I had all the world, but had not Demetrius, I would give all the world, to be in your place, and so win him.

194-201. The antithetical structure should be observed, not only in the *stichomuthia* or balance of line against line, but also within the lines themselves.

200. So Q 1; Q 2 Ff have *His folly, Helena, is none of mine*, thus slightly weakening the antithesis.

207. Cf. ii. 1. 243, and Milton, *Paradise Lost*, i. 254:

“ The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.”

209. *Phœbe*, the moon. Cf. iii. 2. 53-55, where the sun is Phœbus (Apollo), her brother.

211. Cf. ii. 1. 14, 15:

“ I must go seek some dewdrops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.”

215. *faint*, dim. They are very pale greenish yellow. Cf. *Winter's Tale*, iv. 4. 122, where it is certainly the color that Shakespeare notes, of the

“ pale primroses,
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phœbus in his strength.”

Cf. also *Cymbeline*, iv. 2. 220:

“ thou shalt not lack
The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose.”

216-219. *sweet . . . stranger companies*. So Theobald for the *sweld . . . strange companions* of Qq Ff; rightly, I think, on account of the rhymes.

216. *counsel*, secret.

223. *lover's food*, looking at each other.

226. *other some*. *Some* has the force of a substantive, *men, persons*. Cf. Abbott, § 21 and p. 6, where he quotes from Heywood :

"Some with small fare they be not pleased,
Some with much fare they be diseased,
Some with mean fare be scant appeased,
But of all somes none is displeased
To be welcome."

231. *admiring of*. As *doting*, used with the preposition *on* in l. 230, is a participle and *admiring* is parallel to it in construction, Mr. Verity's explanation is that *of* is simply a redundant preposition as used by Bacon (*Advancement of Learning*, II, xxiii, 13): "Neither doth learning admire or esteem of this architecture."

232. *quantity*, value.

235. *wing'd Cupid painted blind*. Cf. Theocritus, *Idyl X*: "Plutus is not the only blind god; he too is blind, the heedless Love!" (Lang, *Theocritus, Moschus, and Bion*, Golden Treasury Series, 1889, p. 56.) Douce says that the earliest English writer who gives it is Chaucer, in his translation of the *Roman de la Rose*: "The god of love, blind as a stone," and that the line is not in the French original. Professor Manly kindly refers me to *The House of Fame*, i. 137:

"Her dowves, and daun Cupido,
Hir blinde son."

249. *a dear expense*, an expense I would gladly incur.

250. *enrich my pain*. Much as I suffer, the sight of him will bring some compensation. This is Helena's real motive. The "thanks" wouldn't greatly have helped one in her state of mind.

SCENE 2

The first scene started the story of the lovers, and showed that it was connected with the wedding-day of Theseus. The second scene starts the story of the rustics. This also is connected with the wedding-day, for it is on that occasion that the interlude is to be acted. And we learn at the end that the rustics, like the lovers, will be in the wood on the morrow night.

A fondness for the drama was widely spread over the England of Elizabeth, and probably Shakespeare had been present at just such scenes as he here describes, in the villages of Warwickshire. Similar episodes may be found in *Love's Labour's Lost*, in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and in the Oxford play of *Narcissus* (see Appendix E). But, though we do not know that Shakespeare is making a direct hit at any special company, he probably does intend a delicate satire upon some of the foibles of actors in general. Such a performer as Bottom, supremely conscious of his own importance, anxious to play all the "fat" parts himself, ordering all his fellows and even the stage-manager about the place, is to be found in nearly every company, amateur or professional. It is a lifelike bit of fooling.

Prose is used for the speech of the rustics throughout. Shakespeare always regards it as appropriate to comic scenes and vulgar personages; and in this play it serves (a) to distinguish the talk of the rustics off the stage from the lines of their interlude, and (b) to emphasize the contrast in Act iii, sc. 1 and Act iv, sc. 1, between Bottom and the fairies. See Appendix H, § 29.

2. *You were best.* In Middle English, preference is regularly expressed by an impersonal construction with a dative. Thus *you were best* is really = (to) you (it) were best. Shakespeare keeps the idiom, but is probably not conscious that *you* is a dative, for he has, e.g. "I were better" (2 *Henry IV*, i. 2. 245), and not "Me were better." See Abbott, § 230.

generally. Bottom means *individually*. The particular form of humor which consists of either (1) using words which bear an exactly opposite sense to that which is intended, as here, or (2) using words which have a different sense, but a similar sound to that which is intended, as in *obscenely* (l. 111), is common to the illiterate clowns of Shakespeare's earlier days, from the Costard of *Love's Labour's Lost* to the Dogberry of *Much Ado About Nothing*. Both forms are common in the early moralities and interludes.

6. *interlude.* In its original sense, a play (*ludus*) in between (*inter*) the courses of a banquet or the diversions of a revel; but in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries used loosely to mean any kind of play.

10. *grow to a point.* So the Qq; F1 has *grow on to a point*. The meaning seems to be *make a beginning*.

11-12. *The most lamentable comedy . . . and a merry.* Cf. v. 1. 56-60. Shakespeare is burlesquing the title-pages of the plays published in his time, of which an example may be found in Thomas

Preston's *A lamentable Tragedy, mixed full of pleasant Mirth, containing The Life of Cambises, King of Persia* (1570?). Cf. note on iv. 2. 20.

Grammarians call this contrast by juxtaposition of opposite conceptions an oxymoron. Shakespeare uses the device somewhat more seriously in *Romeo and Juliet*, i. 1. 182:

“ Why, then, O brawling love! O loving hate!
 O any thing, of nothing first create!
 O heavy lightness! serious vanity!
 Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
 Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health!
 Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is! ”

25. gallant. So Qq; the Ff have *gallantly*. Shakespeare uses adjectives as adverbs freely. Cf. Abbott, § 1. Here, however, it gives an effect of crudity to Quince's speech.

29. condole, lament, not only in the modern limited sense of lamenting in sympathy with another. Cf. *condoling* in l. 43, below.

30. humour, here, *caprice*. In general, it means disposition. Old physiologists classified all temperaments into four, according to the fluid that preponderated in each: sanguine (blood), phlegmatic (phlegm), choleric (yellow bile), melancholic (black bile).

31. a tyrant. Bottom's dramatic ideal is formed upon the ranting blood-and-thunder melodramatic style of tragedy which was so popular when Shakespeare began to write, and which finds an artistic expression in the work of Marlowe. Shakespeare has his serious criticism of a similar manner amongst actors in *Hamlet*, iii. 2. 9:

“ O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise: I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-Herods Herod: pray you, avoid it.”

Besides the natural liking of the groundlings for noise, two literary influences helped to form the type of drama in question. One was the popularity of Seneca's sensational tragedies, on which see R. Fischer, *Zur Kunstentwicklung der englischen Tragödie*, and J. W. Cunliffe, *The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy*. The other was the tradition of the miracle plays, in which certain personages, such as Herod, the “tyrant,” were always treated in a blustering vein.

play Hercules. Hercules, like Herod, was no doubt a typical stage tyrant. Sir Philip Sidney in his *Arcadia* says: "With the voyce of one that playeth Hercules in a play." The first mention of Hercules in English drama is in a list of properties for a "mask of Greek worthies," temp. Edward VI, which includes "a great clobb for one of them representing Hercules." Seneca's *Hercules Furens* was translated by Jasper Heywood in 1561. The old actor in Greene's *Groatworth of Wit* (1592) says, "The twelve labors of Hercules have I terribly thundered on the stage." Hercules occurs as a Worthy in *Love's Labour's Lost* (1589?). It appears from Henslowe's Diary that "the first part of Herculous" was played by the Admiral's men at the Rose as a new interlude May 7, 1595, and "the second part of Hercolas" May 23, 1595. These plays are identified by Mr. Fleay with Heywood's *Silver Age* and *Brazen Age*. On May 16, 1598, Henslowe bought from Martin Slaughter the books of "two parts of Hercolus," and July 16, 1598, he lent Thomas Downton 40 shillings "for to bye a Robe to play Hercolas in." Cf. also the mummers' play of the Nine Worthies, printed by Gollancz in his edition of *The Parliament of the Three Ages*, 1915, Appendix.

32. *tear a cat*, apparently a proverbial phrase for violent action on the stage. Cf. Day, *The Isle of Guls* (1606), "a whole play of such tear-cat thunderclaps"; and *Histriomastix* (1610):

"Sir, is this you would rend and tear the cat
Upon a stage, and now march like a drown'd rat?"

and *The Roaring Girl* (1611), in which there is a character Tear-cat, who says, "I am called by those who have seen my valour, Tear-cat."

make all split. The phrase recurs in Beaumont and Fletcher, *Scornful Lady*, ii. 3. 120, "Two roaring boys of Rome, that made all split." Cf. also the phrase, "split the ears of the groundlings," in the passage quoted from *Hamlet* on p. 93.

33-40. Printed as prose in the Qq Ff. Evidently a burlesque of some play, perhaps, as Rolfe suggests, of a translation of Seneca's *Hercules Furens* published in 1581. He quotes:

"O Lord of ghosts! whose fiery flash
That forth thy hand doth shake,
Doth cause the trembling lodges twain
Of Phœbus' car to shake."

And again,

“ The roaring rocks have quaking stirr'd,
And none thereat hath push'd;
Hell gloomy gates I have brast ope
Where grisly ghosts all hush'd
Have stood.”

47. *a wandering knight*, a knight errant, a familiar figure in the mediæval romances and the later chapbooks based upon them; also in the early romantic comedies. Cf. *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamidas*, *Common Conditions*, and *Horestes*.

50. *a beard coming*. In Elizabethan companies the women's parts were regularly played by boys. Hamlet says to the player in *Hamlet*, ii. 2. 442, “ O, my old friend, thy face is valanced since I saw thee last: comest thou to beard me in Denmark? ”

54. *monstrous little*, another comic oxymoron.

Thisne, Thisne. The Cambridge editors say: “ It may be questioned whether the true reading is not *thisne, thisne*; that is, *in this manner*, a meaning which *thissen* has in several dialects. See Halliwell's *Archaic Dict.* *So-ne* is used in the same way in Suffolk.” But the Qq Ff print the words in italics, as if they were proper names. Perhaps they represent Bottom's first attempt to pronounce *Thisbe* in “ a monstrous little voice.”

62, 65. *Thisby's mother . . . Pyramus' father . . . Thisby's father*. It is to be noted that these personages do not appear either in the rehearsal or in the final performance. See note to iii. 1. 79-108.

77. *fright the duchess and the ladies*. Cf. iii. 1. 31-32, and Introduction, p. vii.

83. *have no more discretion but to hang us*. There is something of a play upon words here, as *discretion* may mean either *choice* or *wits*.

84. *aggravate*, used by Bottom for *soften*, *diminish*; but the normal sense in Shakespeare is *intensify*, *increase*. Cf. *Richard II.* i. 1. 43:

“ the more to aggravate the note
With a foul traitor's name stuff I thy throat.”

And *Edward III.* ii. 1. 445-446:

“ That sin doth ten times aggravate itself,
That is committed in a holy place.”

It never means *provoke*, as in modern usage.

roar you. *You* is the old ethic dative, in the sense of *for your pleasure, for your advantage.* Cf. Abbott, § 220.

85. *sucking dove.* Bottom is trying to express gentleness. He begins with the idea of an infant animal, and changes to that of one proverbial for gentleness. Should there perhaps be a pause after sucking, as the final word is sought?

95. *discharge, perform.*

your, a colloquial use, like that of the Latin *iste*, equivalent to "that you know of." Abbott, § 221.

97. *purple in grain*, purple dyed with the juice of the kermes insect.

99. *French crowns*, a pun. A "French crown" was (a) a French gold coin; (b) a bald head.

103. *to-morrow night.* See note on the *Time* of the Play, p. 82.

107. *properties*, a technical term for furniture and other articles used on the stage. The accounts of the churchwardens at Bassingborne for the performance of a play of St. George as early as 1511 include an item "To the garnement-man for garnements and propyrts."

111. *obscenely.* It is generally said that Bottom means *obscurely*. I incline to think he really means *unseen*, which gives a much nearer sound. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, iv. 1. 145, Costard uses *obscenely* for *seemly*:

"When it comes so smoothly off, so obscenely, as it were, so fit."

Or perhaps he has made one word out of the two *ob-(scure)(un)seen-ly*.

114. *hold or cut bow-strings.* This is clearly a metaphor from archery, though it is diversely explained. I think it means "Hold (*i.e.* keep your promises) or give up the play." To cut bow-strings for archers would be much the same as burning their ships for seamen. The only near parallel is in Chapman and Shirley's *The Ball* (1639):

"*Scutilla.* . . . have you devices

To jeer the rest?

Lucia. All the regiment on 'em, or I'll break my bowstrings."

ACT II — SCENE 1

So far both the main stories of the plot have gone on straightforwardly. The "morrow night," the night of the second day, has come, and both the lovers and the rustics reach the wood as they

had purposed. With the second Act complications begin. And the motive force in the complication of both stories comes from the personages of yet another story, that of the fairies.

In the present scene, ll. 1-187 introduce the fairy story, and put us in possession of its opening situation; ll. 188-246 connect it with the story of the lovers. Oberon discovers the relations of Helena and Demetrius, and resolves to interfere. It must, however, be observed that the fairies are not merely complicating agents in other people's stories. Their quarrels and jealousies, and the trick played by Oberon on Titania, independently illustrate the "lawlessness of love," which is the central idea of the play. The fairies are, in a sense, always young, and, therefore, they never outgrow the characteristics of youthful love. Also, they are supernatural, and as such symbolize the element of mystery in the said central idea. Cf. Introduction, p. xvii.

Appendix A on *Shakespeare's Fairyland* should be carefully read with this scene.

2-13. On the metre, see Appendix H, § 26.

2-5. *Thorough*. So Q 1; Q 2 Ff have *Through*. Shakespeare uses either of these alternative forms to suit his metre. Halliwell considers these lines an imitation of *The Faërie Queene*, VI. viii. 32, l. 1:

"Through hils and dales, through bushes, and through brenes";

but the lines are too commonplace to make imitation certain and, of course, Spenser may have been the borrower.

Drayton imitated this passage in his *Nymphidia* (published 1627), ll. 309-311:

"Thorough Brake, thorough Brier,
Thorough Mucke, thorough Mier,
Thorough Water, thorough Fier,
And thus goes Puck about it."

7. *moonës*. The Qq Ff have *moon's*, but the metre requires the longer form. It is the inflected genitive of Middle English. Cf. iv. 1. 93, "Trip we after nightës shade"; and see König, p. 15, and Appendix H, § 15 (1).

sphere. According to modern astronomy, the moon moves in its sphere or orbit; but in the Ptolemaic and Alphonsine systems the sphere itself was supposed to move. The earth was conceived as the centre of originally eight, later ten concentric spheres, which rotated around it, carrying the planets and fixed stars. A more

detailed description of this cosmogony may be found in Masson's Globe edition of Milton, p. 19 ff., or Orchard's *Milton's Astronomy* (1913), Chapter II.

9. *her orbs upon the green*, the fairy rings. Cf. *The Tempest*, v. 1. 36 :

“ You demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites,”

and see Appendix A. These rings appear to be really due to certain fungi, which increase very rapidly, spread outwards from a centre, and fertilize the herbage by their decay.

10. *pensioners*. Elizabeth kept a body of fifty gentlemen-at-arms under the title of Gentlemen-Pensioners, who wore gorgeous uniforms.

14-15. A four-foot and a five-foot line rhymed together. Cf. ll. 41-42, and iii. 2. 100-101.

15. *a pearl*. Cf. i. 1. 211. This passage is imitated in the anonymous play, *The Wisdome of Doctor Dodypoll* (1600), iii. 5 :

“ ’Twas I that led you through the painted meadows,
Where the light fairies danced upon the flowers,
Hanging on every leaf an orient pearl.”

It has been supposed that *Doctor Dodypoll* was written as early as 1596, because Nash in his preface to *Gabriel Harvey's Hunt is Up*, printed in that year, mentions “ Doctor Dodypowle.” But the name was a synonym for a blockhead as early as Latimer's time. Nash does not, therefore, necessarily refer to the play.

Another imitation of these lines may be found in Carew's *Pastoral Dialogue* :

“ See, love, the blushes of the morn appear;
And now she hangs her pearly store,
Robb'd from the Eastern shore,
I' th' cowslip's ball and rose's ear.”

16. *lob of spirits*. See Glossary, *s.v.* and Appendix A, § 4.

21. *Because that*. Shakespeare uses *because*, *that*, and *because that*, indifferently and in the same sense. See Abbott, §§ 285, 287.

23. *changeling*. See Appendix A, § 6 (5). Titania gives a different account of her boy in ll. 123-136.

25. *trace*, track, wander through. Cf. *Much Ado*, iii. 1. 16 : “ as

we do trace this alley up and down "; and Milton, *Comus*, 423: " May trace huge forests and unharboured heaths."

32. *Either* must be scanned here, and in ii. 2. 156, as a monosyllable, on the analogy of *whether* (i. 1. 69). Cf. Appendix II, § 15 (6).

33. *sprite*. So Q 1; Q 2 F 1 have *spirit*. Cf. Appendix II, § 15 (2).

33-38. Cf. Milton, *L'Allegro*, 104-114:

" And he, by Friar's lantern led,
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat
To earn his cream bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail had threshed the corn
That ten day-labourers could not end;
Then lies him down, the lubber fiend,
And stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings."

35-36. *frights* . . . *Skim*. Note the change of person, from the grammatical antecedent *he* to the logical antecedent *you*.

41-42. A four-foot and a five-foot line rhymed together. Cf. ll. 14-15, and iii. 2. 100-101. Cf. Appendix II, § 26.

46. *filly*. So Q 1; Q 2 Ff have *silly*.

47. *a gossip's bowl*, probably filled with *lamb's wool*, a compound of ale, nutmeg, sugar, toast, and roasted *crabs*, i.e. crab-apples. Cf. Breton's *Fantastickes* (January), " An Apple and Nutmeg make a gossip's cup."

48. *crab*, crab-apple.

51. Cf. *Richard II*, v. 1. 40:

" In winter's tedious nights sit by the fire
With good old folks, and let them tell the tales
Of woeful ages long ago betid; "

and *Winter's Tale*, ii. 1. 25:

" A sad tale's best for winter: I have one
Of sprites and goblins."

54. "*tailor* " *cries*. For all that has been written about this passage, it remains obscure. Dr. Johnson had a vague memory of

a custom of crying "tailor" at a sudden fall backward. The prose *Robin good-fellow; His Mad Pranks and Merry Jests* (Sidgwick, *The Sources and Analogues of a Midsummer-Night's Dream*, 1908, p. 81 ff.), of which the earliest known edition is 1628, tells that Robin learned the trade of a tailor. Inasmuch as Robin is a "puck" — a devil — and as there is a popular aversion to calling the devil by his own name, it may be that "tailor" is a euphemism and shows that the old woman realized who had played the prank on her. Halliwell would connect *tailor* with the old *taylard*, thief.

54-55. *cough* . . . *laugh*. The Qq and Ff spell *coffe* . . . *loffe*, and this probably represents the old pronunciation. Halliwell quotes a ballad of Mother Hubbard, who went to buy her dog a *coffin*, and when she came home found him *loffing*. But that the pronunciation of *laughing* was a moot point appears from Marston's *Parasitaster* (1606), Act iv, sc. 1: "Another has vowed to get the consumption of the lungs, or to leave to posterity the true orthography and pronunciation of *laughing*."

56. *waxen*. Farmer suggested *yexen*, i.e. *hiccup*.

58. *fairy*, a trisyllable, from Old French *faerie*, *féerie*.

60-145. The eternal childishness of the fairies is seen in the light-hearted way in which they carry on their quarrels and reconciliations, making only another sport of their jars.

66-68. *Corin* . . . *Phillida*. Traditional names for shepherd lovers as far back as Tottel's *Miscellany* (1557), borrowed from the eclogues of Greece and Rome. In common use in Shakespeare's time. Cf. also Milton's *L'Allegro*, ll. 83-86.

67. *versing*, putting into verse. Cf. note on i. 1. 98.

69. *steppe*, So Q1; Q2 Ff have *steepe*. But *steppe* was used in Shakespeare's time.

70. *the bouncing Amazon*. Hippolyta was queen of the Amazons. See the passages from North's *Plutarch*, quoted in Appendix C. *Bouncing* is Titania's scornful epithet, flung at a rival of more majestic build than herself. See Appendix G on *Titania* and *Theseus*.

71. Note the characteristically antithetic line, and see Appendix H, § 10.

75. *glance at*, *attack*.

76. *Theseus*. Pronounced here *The'-se-us*, for metrical reasons.

78-80. *Perigenia* . . . *Ægles* . . . *Ariadne* . . . *Antiopa*. Shakespeare perhaps got the rôle of Theseus' mistresses from North's *Plutarch*. See Appendix C.

79. *Ægles*. Qq and Ff have *Eagles*. Most editors read *Ægle*,

which is the correct classical form of the name, but Shakespeare found it in North as *Ægles*, and probably wrote that.

82-116. On the probable allusion in this passage to the tempests of 1594, see Introduction, p. vi, and Appendix B.

The fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are elemental beings, though not so completely so as those in *The Tempest*. Their bickering disturbs the serenity of the moon and the winds. See Appendix A, § 6 (7).

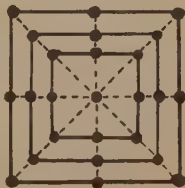
82. *the middle summer's spring*. See note on the *Time* of the Play, p. 82. The nearest parallel to the phrase is in Churchyard's *Charitie* (1595), where a *summer spring* apparently stands for *the beginning of summer*. *Spring* means *beginning*, in such phrases as "the day-spring from on high" (*St. Luke*, i. 78), and "the spring of day" (2 *Henry IV*, iv. 4. 35).

86. *ringlets*. Not curls, but dances in a ring.

88. *piping to us in vain*. A reminiscence of "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented."

91. *Hath*. So Qq and Ff. Modern editors read *Have*, but the singular verb after a plural subject is too common in Shakespeare to require much remark. Cf. Abbott, §§ 332-338 (especially § 334), and Appendix iv to Mr. G. C. Moore Smith's edition of *Henry V* in this series.

98. *nine men's morris*. A game played on a table like the one here figured. Each player had a certain number, generally nine, of men or pins, and the object of the game was to move these, according to certain rules, so as to get three in a row. The table was either drawn on a board or cut in the turf. The name is probably a corruption of the French *merelles* or *mereaux*, i.e. *counters*, and the game is also called in various places by the names of *Merrils*, or *Ninepenny* (*Nine Pin*), *Five-penny*, or *Three-penny Morris*. It must be carefully distinguished from *Nine Pins*, and from *Nine Holes*, in which a ball was rolled at nine holes cut in the ground, or at nine arches, as in *Bagatelle*. See Alice B. Gomme, *Traditional Games*, i. 414.



99. *quaint mazes*. On certain greens, such as St. Catherine's Hill at Winchester, complicated labyrinths are marked out on the grass, and are kept fresh by boys running along the windings of them.

101-103. The connection of ideas in this passage has puzzled the commentators. I think they have been misled (*a*) by the punctuation of Qq Ff, which have only a comma at the end of line 101; and (*b*) by the assumption that "hymns and carols" belong necessarily to "winter" nights. I prefer to put a full stop after l. 101, and begin a new period with l. 102. Then I should explain the passage as follows: In ll. 88-101 Titania describes the inclement summer due to the revenge of the winds. She concludes: "The summer is so bad, that men wish it were winter." Then she begins again: "Not only have we offended the winds, but we have neglected the hymns and carols due from us to the moon. Therefore she too is wrathful, and does her part to spoil the weather." The explanation of the "hymns and carols," as addressed to the moon, may be supported from i. 1. 73, "Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon."

101. *human mortals*, human beings, as over against fairies.

103-104. *the moon, the governess of floods . . . washes all the air.* Cf. "the watery moon" (l. 162); also *Hamlet*, i. 1. 118:

"the moist star

Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands;"

and *Winter's Tale*, i. 2. 426:

"you may as well

Forbid the sea for to obey the moon."

Shakespeare regards the moon, not only as ruling the tides, but also as drawing up moisture from the earth. It is true that a "moist," "watery," or hazy moon is generally followed by rain.

105. *rheumatic*, due to a superfluity of humors (cf. note on i. 2. 30), from *ῥεῦμα*, a humor, *ῥέειν*, to flow. The term included colds, catarrhs, etc., as well as what we call rheumatism. Accent *rheu'matic*.

106. *this distemperature*, *i.e.* the disorder of the winds and moon.

109. *thin*, *i.e.* scantily covered. This is Tyrwhitt's conjecture for the *chin* of Qq Ff. A chaplet could not be hung on a chin.

113. *Their wonted liveries*, their wonted outward appearances. The line may be scanned either:

"Their wont' | ed liv' | cries, | and' the | maz'd' world',"

which requires a rather undue stress on *and*, to avoid the succession of four unstressed syllables, or,

"Their wont' | ed liv' | cries, and | the ma' | zed world'."

114. *their increase*, i.e. the natural products of each season, which no longer serve to distinguish them, by coming at their true time.

123. Cf. l. 23 and note.

136-137. A succession of lines which all begin in the same way is much in Shakespeare's earlier manner. Cf. *Merchant of Venice*, v. 1. 193-194:

"If you did know to whom I gave the ring,
If you did know for whom I gave the ring," etc.

138. *intend you stay*. The particle *to* was much more freely omitted before the infinitive in Elizabethan than in modern English. Cf. Abbott, § 349.

146-168. On the supposed historical allusions in this passage, see Appendix F.

146. *thou shalt not from this grove*. A verb of motion is often omitted between an auxiliary and a preposition of motion. Cf. Abbott, § 405.

147. *injury*, insult.

149. *Since*, in the sense of *when*. Cf. Abbott, § 132.

153. *spheres*. Cf. note on l. 7.

156. *cold*. The moon is *cold*, physically, because her rays do not burn like the sun's, and spiritually, as the patroness of chastity. Cf. l. 162.

158. *vestal*. The priestesses of Vesta at Rome, like those of Artemis-Diana at Athens, were vowed to perpetual virginity.

by the west, i.e. in England, to the west of Athens.

162. *watery*. Cf. ll. 103-104, note.

168. *love-in-idleness*. The *Viola tricolor*, or common pansy, is sometimes of a milky-white color, sometimes splashed and stained with purple. Shakespeare's conceit is founded upon stories in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which flowers are created or are changed in color by the blood of some hero or heroine. Such is the staining of the mulberry by the blood of Pyramus. See Appendix D. Many of the popular names of the pansy treat it as the emblem of boy-and-girl love. It is called, for instance, besides Love in Idleness, Cuddle me to you, and Meet me in the Entry, and Kiss me in the Buttery.

174. Cf. Chapman, *Bussy D'Ambois*, Act i. sc. 1. 22-23:

"In tall ships richly built and ribbed with brass,
To put a girdle round about the world."

184. *another herb*, the "Dian's bud." Cf. iv. 1. 76.

186. *I am invisible*. It is not necessary for Oberon to tell Puck this, but it is necessary for Shakespeare to tell the audience, to explain how it is that Demetrius and Helena do not see him during what follows. Among properties listed by Henslowe is "a cloak to go invisible in" — which suggests a stage convention on this point.

190. *slay . . . slayeth*. So Thirlby for the *stay . . . stayeth* of the Qq Ff.

192. *wode within this wood*, a pun. Q 1 distinguishes the words as *wodde* and *wood*; in Q 2 F 1 both are spelt *wood*. See Glossary.

195-197. I do not think that Helena is drawing a distinction between iron and steel. The point seems to be: you draw my heart as adamant draws iron; yet, though my heart be true as steel, it is not in other respects like iron; *i.e.* it is not hard.

To get this sense, we must explain *for* as meaning *for all that*. Abbott, § 154, quotes a passage from North's *Plutarch*, where *for all these reasons* stands as a translation of *non obstant toutes ces raisons*.

195. *adamant* is here *loadstone*, more usually *diamond*. See Glossary.

201. *nor I cannot*. A double negative is common in Shakespeare. Cf. Abbott, § 406.

208. *worser*. A double comparative or superlative is also frequently found. Cf. "more better" (iii. 1. 21). Abbott, § 11, explains the idiom as giving emphasis, but here at least it seems to be only due to the need for another syllable.

214. *impeach*, lay open to reproach. Cf. *Richard II*, i. 1. 189: "Shall I . . . with pale beggar-fear impeach my height." From the Fr. *empêcher*, Lat. *impedicare*, catch by the foot.

220-221. Qq Ff punctuation is:

"Your virtue is my privilege: for that
It is."

The alteration in the text, due to Malone, seems to me to give a better sense, and a better rhythm. Neither pauses after the fourth foot nor run-on lines are characteristic of this play. Cf. Appendix H, § 20.

231. The story of the flight of Daphne from Apollo, until she was turned into a laurel, is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, i. 452 ff.; Golding, ll. 542 ff.

235. *stay*, stay for.

243. *a heaven of hell*. Cf. i. 1. 207.

244. *upon* here denotes the cause or instrument. Cf. Abbott, § 191.

249. A difficult line to scan. Pope boldly read *whereon*. Other critics treat *where* or *wild* or *thyme* as a dissyllable. It may be an octosyllabic line, with a tripping anapaestic third foot:

"I know' | a bank' | where the wild' | thyme' blows'."

The trisyllable, followed by a spondee, perhaps prevents the line from being felt as too short. Or with elision of *the* before a consonant, it may be read:

"I know' | a bank' | where th' wild' | thyme' blows'."

See Appendix II, § 18.

250. *grows*. Cf. note on line 91.

oxlips. The plant commonly so called is a hybrid between the primrose and the cowslip. "Bold oxlips" are among the flowers of Perdita's imagined nosegay in *Winter's Tale*, iv. 4. 125.

251. *woodbine*, probably honeysuckle, but see note on iv. 1. 45.

It is possible to scan:

"Quite o' | ver can' | opied with | lusc'ious | wood'bine'."

but this requires an awkward elision before *p* in the third foot, and an awkward inversion of accent in the fourth foot. I should prefer, with Theobald, to read *lush*. The spelling of Q 1 is *over-canopi'd*, that of Q 2 Ff, *over-canoped* or *over-cannoped*. Perhaps, therefore, if the word is shortened it should be by elision, not of *o*, but of *ie*.

252. *musk-roses*. The name is generally given in the herbals to a large single garden rose, the *Rosa moschata*. If Shakespeare intends a wild flower, it is perhaps the low-growing brown-calyxed *Rosa arvensis*.

eglantine, the sweet-brier. Arviragus says of Imogen in *Cymbeline*, iv. 2. 220:

"Thou shalt not lack . . .
The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander,
Out-sweeten'd not thy breath."

Cf. Ellacombe, *Plant-lore of Shakespeare*.

255. *throws*, sheds.

268. Another Biblical reminiscence; cf. *St. Luke*, vii. 8, "I say . . . to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."

SCENE 2

Lines 1-26, with their song and dance, are part of the masque-like element in the play. The rest of the scene serves to advance the action of the fairy story and of the lover story. In the fairy story, lines 27-34 bring about the complication of which the motive was provided by the jealousy of Oberon in the last scene, and of which the crisis will arrive in Act iii, sc. 1. In the lover story (ll. 35-156), the crisis, which consists of the turning of both Demetrius and Lysander from Hermia to Helena, is divided between the present scene and Act iii, sc. 2. Puck's mistake comes in as a second motive, to alter the effect of Oberon's whim, and thus it is that Lysander's eyes are anointed instead of those of Demetrius.

2. *the third part of a minute*. The fairies dwell in small degrees, both of time and space.

3. *musk-rose buds*. Cf. ii. 1. 252, note.

6. *clamorous owl*. Cf. *Macbeth*, ii. 3. 64, 65:

“ the obscure bird
Clamoured the live-long night.”

9. *double*, *i.e.* forked.

11. *Newts and blind-worms* are harmless enough, but “ eye of newt ” and “ blindworm's sting ” are included among the poisonous elements of the witches' caldron in *Macbeth*, iv. 1. 14-16.

13. *Philomel*, the Greek name for the nightingale.

20. *spiders* were held to be poisonous. Cf. *Richard II*, iii. 2. 14, “ Thy spiders, that suck up thy venom ” (*i.e.* earth's venom).

27-34. The trochaic metre used here and in lines 66-83 is Shakespeare's favorite rhythm for supernatural speakers. See Appendix H, § 26.

30-31. These lines prepare the way for Titania's infatuation with the transformed Bottom.

46. Love enables lovers to understand each other's true meaning.

49. *interchained*. So Qq; the *interchanged* of the Ff is less forcible.

68. *approve*, test.

77. A difficult line to scan. Pope read *near to*, and Walker *nearer*. It may be scanned:

“ Near this' | lack-love', | this kill'- | courtesy'.”

Other iambic lines are 69, 74, 75.

Or perhaps it should be :

"Near this | lack'-love, | this kill- | court' es | y'." Cf. ii. 1. 15.

79. *owe*, possess, a variant form of *own* (*ow-e-n*).

89. *lesser*. Cf. note on *worser* (ii. 1. 208).

grace, answer to prayer, and so, good fortune, happiness.

99. *sphery eyne*, eyes that have the brightness of stars in their spheres.

104. *Nature shows art*. So the Qq. F 1 has *Nature her shews art*, corrected by the later Ff into *Nature here shews art*, and by Malone into *Nature shews her art*.

108-109. These jerky lines, with their staccato emphasis, and reiteration of the sound "so . . . so . . . though . . . though," may be looked upon as comparatively youthful work.

113. *Helena I love*. So Q 1. Q 2 Ff have *Helena now I love*.

118. *ripe*, a verb here. Cf. *As You Like It*, ii. 7. 26 :

"And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,
And then from hour to hour we rot and rot."

119. My reason has reached the "point," that is, the "height" of human "skill" or "wisdom," in learning to appreciate Helena.

122. *love's richest book*. Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, iv. 3. 350 :

"From women's eyes this doctrine I derive :
They sparkle still the right Promethean fire ;
They are the books, the arts, the academes,
That show, contain, and nourish all the world ;"

and *Romeo and Juliet*, i. 3. 81 :

"Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face,

.

And what obscured in this fair volume lies,
Find written in the margent of his eyes."

150. *you*. So Qq ; Ff read *yet*.

154. *of all loves*. *Of* is often used in protestations ; cf. Abbott, § 169. In *Othello*, iii. 1. 13, Q 1 has "*of all loves*," which is altered in F 1 into "*for love's sake*." Cf. also *Twelfth Night*, v. 1. 237, "*Of charity, what kin are you to me?*"

156. *Either* must be scanned as a monosyllable : cf. ii. 1. 32, note

ACT III — SCENE 1

In this scene the fairy story and the rustic story meet. The action is so contrived that one event, the transformation of Bottom, serves as the complication in them both: in the rustic story, by breaking up the rehearsal; in the fairy story, by providing a monster for Titania to fall in love with. The result of this combination is to provide just that absurd mixture of masque and antimasque, the broadly farcical and the delicately beautiful, which the Elizabethan taste loved.

Bottom and his fellows have come to the same part of the wood in which the last scene took place. The elves have departed on their various offices, and Titania is sleeping on her bank. She is, of course, invisible to the rustics.

4-5. *tiring-house*, that is, attiring-house or green-room; which, in the Elizabethan theatre, appears to have been a room immediately behind the stage.

13. *By'r lakin*, in full, *by our ladykin* or *little lady*, is, like *marry*, an oath by the Virgin Mary. Q 1 spells it *Berlakin*; Q 2 Ff *Berlaken*.

18. *a prologue*. The *πρόλογος*, prologue or fore-word, of Greek drama, was the name given to the opening scene, in which the situation of the *dro·atis personæ* was generally described by one of them. It lingered in the Elizabethan drama, not as part of the action, but as an introductory speech delivered from the stage before the actual play began. Shakespeare introduced a prologue into the interlude in *Hamlet*, Act iii, sc. 2, and uses the device himself in *Henry V* and in *Romeo and Juliet*. But the Elizabethan prologue, unlike the Greek, generally gave an outline of the coming plot. Cf. *Hamlet*, iii. 2. 151, "We shall know by this fellow; the players cannot keep counsel; they'll tell all." Sometimes, however, it was rather of the nature of an address or apology from the actors or the poet to the audience. Ben Jonson so uses it; and that is what Bottom here proposes. An epilogue occasionally, as in *As You Like It*, served a similar purpose.

21. *more better*. Cf. note on *worser* in ii. 1. 208.

22. *not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver*. Cf. l. 55. Malone finds here a reminiscence of an event of which an account is preserved in a MS. collection of jests made by Sir Nicholas L'Estrange in Harl. MS. 6395: "There was a spectacle presented to Queen Elizabeth upon the water, and among others Harry Goldingham was to represent Arion upon the dolphin's back; but

finding his voice to be very hoarse and unpleasant, when he came to perform it, he tears off his disguise, and swears he was none of Arion, not he, but even honest Harry Goldingham; which blunt discovery pleased the queen better than if it had gone through in the right way: yet he could order his voice to an instrument exceeding well." Scott has used this incident in *Kenilworth*.

25. *eight and six*; i.e. alternating lines of eight and six syllables respectively, the metre of Bottom's song (ll. 128-131), and the "common metre" of the metrical psalms.

Quince appears to be the author of the interlude. He is doubtless the local poet. Bottom says in iv. 1. 219-220, "I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream."

31-32. *a lion among ladies*. Cf. Introduction, p. vii.

33. *fearful wild-fowl*, a delightfully topsy-turvy phrase.

your. Cf. note on i. 2. 95.

40. *defect*. Bottom means *effect*.

44. *pity of my life*, a common phrase. *Of* has the sense of *concerning, about*. Cf. "desire you of more acquaintance" (l. 163), and Abbott, § 174.

48-49. *there is two hard things*. A singular verb goes more readily with a plural subject when the verb comes first. Cf. Abbott, § 335.

56. See the note on the *Time* of the Play, p. 82.

61. *a bush of thorns and a lanthorn*. Cf. note on v. i. 248-250.

62. *disfigure*. Quince means *figure forth*.

present, a technical stage term for *act*.

70. *and let*. So Collier for the *or let* of Qq Ff.

79-108. It is noteworthy that the passages here rehearsed do not form part of the play as presented in Act v; and, further, that the prologue actually used is not written either in "eight and six" or "eight and eight," but in "ten and ten." Again, Starveling, Snout, and Quince do not play Thisby's mother, Pyramus' father, and Thisby's father, as was arranged in Act i, sc. 1, for those characters do not appear at all. The actors assigned to them probably play Prologue, Wall, and Moonshine. One gathers that Quince revised his play between this rehearsal and the performance, though there is no mention of a second rehearsal. The inconsistency is quite easily explained as the device of a good dramatist to avoid a tedious repetition and to get in fresh fun.

79. *hempen home-spuns*. Rustics who wear homespun garments made of hemp. Cf. the passage from Nash's *Terrors of the Night*, Appendix A, § 5 (3).

85. *Odorous, odorous.* Qq have *odours, odorous*; Ff *odours, odours*. I have ventured to adopt Collier's emendation. The Ff reading makes Quince's correction as absurd as Bottom's original mistake. Cf. the "caparisons are odorous" of Sheridan's *Mrs. Malaprop*.

86. *odours.* Bottom has not quite caught the right word even now.

90. Puck's instinct for mischief suggests to him a trick which will fit in admirably with Oberon's scheme to make Titania ridiculous.

97. *Jew.* Why *Jew*, except for the jingle with *juvenal*? According to the legend, Pyramus and Thisbe were of Babylon, but perhaps this is near enough to Judæa for Shakespeare.

106. For some hints whence Shakespeare may have got the idea of transformation to an ass, see Appendix A, § 6 (4). In the prose *History of Dr. Faustus*, the magician puts asses' heads on the guests at a banquet; but Marlowe does not keep this detail.

This line is variously punctuated by the commentators. I think the sense is:

If I were, fair Thisby, [if] I were only thine.

But perhaps the punctuation of the text, which is also that of the Qq Ff, should be retained, and Bottom be supposed to blunder over his stops, like Quince in his Prologue (v. 1. 108-117).

110. Cf. ii. 1. 3-5.

111-112. On Puck's powers of transformation, etc., see Appendix A, § 6 (4).

112. *a fire*, in his capacity as Will o' the Wisp, or *ignis fatuus*.

119-120. *you see an ass-head of your own, do you?* Bottom must not be supposed now, or at any time, to realize the full nature of the change that has befallen him. So far, of course, he has not realized that there has been any change at all. There is a comic irony in his allusions to asses here and in iv. 1. 211 ff. They have a meaning to his hearers which he does not know of. Halliwell says that Bottom is using a vernacular Elizabethan retort, and compares *Merry Wives*:

"You shall have a fool's head of your own."

122. *translated, transformed.*

123-124. *make an ass of me.* Cf. note on ll. 119-120.

131. *little quill*, little pipe, *i.e.* shrill note.

134. *plain-song cuckoo.* Plain song was a term originally applied to grave, simple ecclesiastical chants. This distinction exactly fits

the difference between the monotonous note of the cuckoo and the richly varied music — "brave prick song" Lyly calls it — of the nightingale. But the cuckoo's note is definitely *song*. Mr. W. W. Fowler, in his *Summer Studies of Birds and Books*, points out that this is one of the few birds, the intervals of whose voices agree with those of our artificial musical scale. Generally the cuckoo sings in a minor third. This was observed by White of Selborne, and by Browning, who speaks of —

"the word in a minor third
There is none but the cuckoo knows."

But all cuckoos occasionally, and some of them always, prefer some other interval, such as a major third.

135. The note of the cuckoo, resembling a mocking repetition of "cuckold, cuckold," was supposed to hint to the hearer that his wife had been unfaithful to him. Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. 2. 908-912:

"The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,
Cuckoo;
Cuckoo, cuckoo: O word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear."

169. *dewberries*, a species of blackberry.

173. *the fiery glow-worm's eyes*. Shakespeare's observation is that of the poet rather than the naturalist. He believes the sting of the adder to lie in its tongue; cf. iii. 2. 72, and *Richard II*, iii. 2. 20:

"a lurking adder,
Whose double tongue may with a mortal touch
Throw death upon the sovereign's enemies."

But perhaps by "fiery . . . eyes" Shakespeare here means eyes, or spots of light. Cf. iii. 2. 188, "all yon fiery oes and eyes of light."

182. *mercy*, i.e. pardon.

185. *desire you of more acquaintance*. *Of* has the sense of *as regards*. Cf. "pity of my life" (l. 44), and Abbott, § 174.

186. *if I cut my finger*. Cobweb is still used as a styptic, to stanch blood.

191. *Squash*, an unripe peapod. Cf. *Twelfth Night*, i. 5. 165: "Not yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy; as a squash is before it is a peascod."

198-199. *many a gentleman of your house*. In England mustard is always served with roast beef.

200. *a watery eye*. Cf. ii. 1. 103-104, note; and ii. 1. 101-103, note, on the moon as a patroness of *chastity*.

205. *enforced chastity*, not compulsory chastity, but violated chastity.

206. *love's*. So Pope. The *lover's* of the Qq Ff is possible.

SCENE 2

This long scene deals almost entirely with the story of the lovers, taking it up where it was dropped at the end of Act ii, sc. 2. There are just sufficient references to the fairy story in ll. 1-34 and ll. 374-377 to prevent it from passing altogether out of mind. Act i, sc. 2 contained the first step in the complication of the lover story, in that, through Oberon's good-nature, and Puck's mistake, Lysander's love was turned from Hermia to Helena. The present scene contains: (1) the second step in this complication, the diversion of Demetrius's love also to Helena; (2) the crisis, in the angry disputes of the men and maidens; (3) the beginning of the resolution, or unraveling, by the application of the antidote to Lysander's eye.

The scene is laid in another part of the wood from that in which both Act ii, sc. 2 and Act iii, sc. 1 took place.

1-40. Puck reports to Oberon his success in making Titania ridiculous, and, as he thinks, in bewitching Demetrius with Helena.

3. *in extremity*, to an extreme degree.

5. *night-rule*. This has been somewhat fantastically regarded as a corruption of *night-revel*; but it does not seem to mean anything but *conduct*. Halliwell quotes from the statutes of London, as given in Stow's *Survey*, "No man shall, after the hour of nine at the night, keep any rule whereby any such sudden outcry be made in the still of the night, as making any affray." Cf. also *Twelfth Night*, ii. 3. 130, "Mistress Mary, if you prized my lady's favor at anything more than contempt, you would not give means for this uncivil rule."

7. *close*, secret.

9. *mechanicals*, artisans.

13. *thick-skin*. Cf. Philemon Holland, *Pliny*, i. 346, "Some measure not the fineness of spirit and wit by the purity of blood, but suppose that creatures are brutish, more or less, according as their skin is thicker or thinner."

sort, company; generally in a contemptuous sense; *e.g.* *Richard III*, v. 3. 316: "a sort of vagabonds"; 2 *Henry VI*, iii. 2. 277: "a sort of tinkers." Cf. l. 21.

14. *presented*, represented, *i.e.* acted.

19. *mimic*, actor.

21. *russet-pated choughs*, jackdaws with russet or ashen-gray heads.

25. *at our stamp*. The fairies, as elemental beings, have the power of shaking the earth. Cf. Appendix A, § 6 (7) and iv. 1. 89–90 where Oberon says:

"Sound, music! Come, my queen, take hands with me,
And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be."

Cf. also the "hemton hamten" passage quoted from Scott in Appendix A, § 6 (2), which may have stuck in Shakespeare's memory.

32. *sweet*. Often used contemptuously by Shakespeare.

41–87. Hermia discovered the absence of Lysander at the close of Act ii, sc. 2. In seeking for him she falls in with Demetrius. He woos, and she responds with questions as to Lysander. In the end she goes, and Demetrius lies down to sleep.

45. *should*, ought to.

55. *Her brother's*. The classical moon-goddess, Phœbe, was sister of the sun-god, Phœbus or Apollo.

the Antipodes, that is, properly, not the opposite hemisphere itself, but the dwellers there, whose feet are over against ours. Cf. *Richard II*, iii. 2. 47, where Richard compares himself to the sun:

"this thief, this traitor, Bolingbroke,
Who all this while hath revell'd in the night
Whilst we were wandering with the Antipodes."

57. *dead*, deadly. The double sense of the word gives Demetrius his opportunity for a retort.

70. *touch*, exploit; cf. the Fr. *coup*. This precise sense does not occur again in Shakespeare.

71. *worm*, serpent, especially one of small size. So in *Antony and Cleopatra*, v. 2. 242, an asp is called "the pretty worm of Nilus."

72. *doubler tongue*. Here again Shakespeare's natural history is at fault. Cf. note on iii. 1. 154. But of course the adder's *double tongue* is symbolical of the doubleness of treachery.

80. Pope added *so*, which is omitted in the Qq and Ff.

87. *his tender*, *i.e.* sleep's tender.

88 176. Oberon gathers from what he has overheard that it is not Demetrius whose eyes have been enchanted. He resolves to repair the error, sends Puck for Helena, and in the meantime himself anoints Demetrius's eyes. Helena enters, still wooed by Lysander, who had followed her at the end of Act ii, sc. 2. Demetrius wakes, and he too, as soon as his eyes fall upon Helena, begins to woo her. So now the fairies have brought about a double faithlessness, and both of Hermia's former lovers have left her for Helena.

92 93. Puck glances at the central idea of the play. Whatever we may do, fate will have it so that most men are false and changeable in love.

97. *sighs . . . that cost the fresh blood dear.* Cf. 2 *Henry VI*, iii. 2, 60-63:

"Might liquid tears or heart-offending groans
Or blood-consuming sighs recall his life,
I would be blind with weeping, sick with groans,
Look pale as primrose with blood-drinking sighs."

101. Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Bk. x, 687, "as swift as arrow from a Turkye bowe."

113. *a lover's fee.* Halliwell explains this as meaning proverbially three kisses. He quotes an old ballad:

"How many? says Batt;
Why, three, says Matt,
For that's a maiden's fee."

114. *pageant*, spectacle; from L. *L. pagina*, scaffold (*pangere*, fasten together): originally applied to the movable wooden scaffolds on which the mysteries or miracle plays were shown; thence to dramatic and pseudo-dramatic performances themselves.

119. *alone*, that is *unequaled*. Cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, iv. 6, 30:

"I am alone the villain of the earth."

129. *truth kills truth.* If Lysander's present vows to Helena are true, then he must have been perjured to Hermia.

136. Lysander's confident assertion of Demetrius's love for Hermia leads up dramatically to the latter's declaration to Helena.

137-144. These lines are amusingly reminiscent of the traditional hyperboles in which Elizabethan sonneteers celebrated the charms of their mistresses.

144. *princess of pure white*. There does not seem to be any difficulty in this phrase as applied to a lady's hand, but Hammer thought it necessary to read *pureness*, and Collier *impress*.

150. *join in souls*, agree together. Helena thinks throughout the scene that the two men have conspired with Hermia to mock her. Against this ungenerous conduct she makes a very proper and spirited protest.

160. *extort*, wrest away.

177-344. Hermia, still pursuing Lysander, enters to complete the situation, and in the humorous absurdities of the passage that follows, the lover story reaches its crisis. Helena still thinks she is flouted, and that Hermia is in the plot; finding Hermia to be downright angry, she gets frightened, and would gladly escape to Athens. Lysander and Demetrius end by going off to fight for Helena. Hermia at first believes that Lysander is only scorning Helena; when she realizes that she has lost her lover, she flies into a passion, and wishes to do her rival an injury. There is more differentiation of character here than elsewhere in the story, between Hermia, the diminutive shrew, and Helena, the long-legged coward.

177. *his*. This is the usual form in Elizabethan as in Middle English for the possessive of the neuter as well as of the masculine pronoun. *Its* was just coming into use in Shakespeare's time. It is common in Florio's Montaigne, but is never found in the 1611 version of the Bible. *Its* only appears six times in the early editions of Shakespeare's plays, and all of these are in F 1. The Q 1 of *King Lear*, iv. 2. 32, has *ith*, which is probably a misprint for the uninflected pronoun *it*, which was used as a possessive in the Midland dialect. This is found several times in Shakespeare. See Sweet, *Short English Grammar*, § 399; Abbott, § 228; and G. L. Craik, *English of Shakespeare*, pp. 160-170.

188. *oes and eyes of light*. There is probably a pun here. Shakespeare elsewhere uses O for a circle. In *Henry V*, Prol. 13, he calls the theatre a "wooden O"; and in *Antony and Cleopatra*, v. 2. 81, speaks of "this little O, the earth." Cf. also Bacon, *Essay* 37, "And *oes* or *spangs*, as they are of no great cost, so they are of most glory."

195. *injurious*, insulting.

201. *O, is all forgot?* So Qq Ff. Many editors adopt Spalding's conjecture, *O, is it all forgot*; but the *O* really represents a sob, and is metrically equivalent to two syllables. Cf. Appendix II, § 17.

203. *artificial gods*. The word *artificial* is here associated with

artificer, craftsman, and *gods* perhaps refers to the fact that they sat as still as two little images on their cushion.

204. *needles*, a monosyllable, probably pronounced *nēelds*. In *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, we find *neele*.

213-214. Theobald suggested *first, like*, for the *first life* of Qq Ff.

Douce explains the passage thus: "Helen exemplifies her position by a simile, — 'we had *two of the first*, i.e. *bodies*, like the double coats in heraldry that belong to man and wife as *one person*, but which, like our *single heart*, have but one *crest*.'" But heraldically *of the first* signifies the repetition of identical quarterings more than once in the same shield. Helena likens Hermia and herself to such quarterings, and as they are due to but one bearer, and are surmounted with his single crest, so she and her friend had but a single heart.

220. *passionate*. F 1 inserts this word, accidentally omitted in the Qq.

237. *perséver* is regularly so accented in Shakespeare. Cf. Appendix H, § 15 (10).

242. *argument*, subject of *jest*.

250. *prayers*. So Theobald for the *praise* of the Qq Ff.

256. It begins to dawn upon Hermia that Lysander is in earnest.

257. *Ethiope*. Cf. line 263, "out, tawny Tartar." Hermia is a dark beauty and Helena fair.

257-258. The Qq have:

Dem. no, no; he'll
 Seem to break loose,

and the Ff:

Dem. No, no, Sir,
 Seem to break loose.

The arrangement of the text, which I have adopted, was suggested by Mr. G. Joicey in *Notes and Queries*, 8th series, iii. 102. The Cambridge editors give the whole to Demetrius, supposing him to begin his taunt impersonally, "No, no, he'll" [not fight]; and then, breaking off, to address Lysander directly.

260. *thou cat, thou burr*. The point is in the way Hermia is clinging to him.

265. Helena still thinks that both Lysander and Hermia are playing a prearranged comedy.

275. *Since night*, i.e. since night fell; it is still the same night.

282. *juggler*, a trisyllable. Cf. Appendix H, § 15 (8).

canker-blossom. This may be either (1) a compound of the verb *canker* with the noun *blossom*, on the analogy of *spoil-sport*, meaning "you who have killed Lysander's love for me as the worm devours the blossom"; or it may be (2) the blossom of the dog-rose, *Rosa canina*, which was sometimes called the canker-rose. Cf. Sonnet 54:

"The canker-blooms have full as deep a dye
As the perfumed tincture of the roses,
Hang on such thorns and play as wantonly
When summer's breath their masked buds discloses:
But, for their virtue only is their show,
They live unwoo'd and unrespected fade,
Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odors made."

Canker sometimes has this sense; cf. *1 Henry IV*, i. 3. 175:

"To put down Richard, that sweet, lovely rose,
And plant this thorn, this canker, Bolingbroke;"

and *Much Ado*, i. 3. 27:

"I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace."

If this is the meaning of "canker-blossom" here, *Hermia's* point will be that *Helena* has juggled herself into *Lysander's* affections, and is as poor a substitute for her rival as the canker-blossom is for the garden rose.

288. *you counterfeit, you puppet*, you doll aping humanity.

292. Scan;

"And with | her per' | sonage, her | tall' per' | sönage,"

and note the same word pronounced as a dissyllable and a trisyllable in the same line. Cf. Appendix H, § 15.

296. *thou painted maypole*. Stubbes, in his *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583), describes the Maypole as "some tyme painted with variable colors." The dark *Hermia* is jeering at her rival's pink-and-white cheeks.

302. *right*, typical.

329. *hindering knot-grass*. The knot-grass is a low-growing herb of the buckwheat family. It is probably called "hindering" because it was supposed to stunt the growth of children. Cf. Beau-

mont and Fletcher, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, ii. 2. 30-31, "Should they put him into a straight pair of gaskins, 'twere worse than knot-grass, he would never grow after it"; and *The Coxcomb*, "We want a boy extremely for this function, kept under, for a year, with milk and knot-grass." But the "knot-grass" also "hinders" the plough, and is called in the north the Deil's-lingels; just as another plant is, for the same reason, known as Rest-harrow.

333. *intend*, offer.

338. The duel between Lysander and Demetrius for Helena may be suggested by that between Palemon and Arcite for Emilia in the *Knight's Tale*.

344. This line is accidentally omitted in F 1, which gives no *Exit* for Helena or Hermia.

344-400. This episode begins the unraveling of the lover story. The humorous confusion is to continue a little longer, and then Lysander is to be restored to his love for Hermia, while Demetrius is to retain his for Helena. Oberon also prepares for the similar unraveling of the fairy story.

348-351. Puck quotes, as far as possible, Oberon's very words; cf. ii. 1. 261, 263-264.

351. *'noited*. For the omission of the initial syllable, see Appendix H, § 15 (7).

352. *sort*, befall, fall out; cf. *Hamlet*, i. 1. 109:

"Well may it sort, that this portentous figure
Comes armed through our watch."

355. On the power of the fairies to overcast the night, see Appendix A, § 6 (7).

365. *With leaden legs and batty wings*, a description which suggests both the heaviness and the darkness of sleep.

366. *this herb*, the antidote referred to in ii. 1. 184. It is afterwards called "Dian's bud"; cf. note on iv. 1. 76.

367. *virtuous* here combines the two senses of *efficacious* and *beneficent*.

379. *night's swift dragons*. Cf. *Cymbeline*, ii. 2. 48, "Swift, swift, you dragons of the night"; and Milton, *Il Penseroso*, 59, "While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke."

380. *Aurora's harbinger*, Venus Phosphor, the morning star. Cf. Milton, *May Morning*, 1, "Now the bright morning-star, day's harbinger."

381-387. Cf. *Hamlet*, i. 1. 149:

“ I have heard,
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day; and at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
The extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine; ”

and Milton, *Ode on the Nativity*, 232:

“ The flocking shadows pale
Troop to the infernal jail;
Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave;
And the yellow-skirted fays
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved maze.”

383. *crossways and floods*. Suicides, whose bodies were either never recovered from the water, or else buried in crossways without religious rites, were looked upon as especially doomed to wander.

388. *spirits of another sort*, *i.e.* not mere ghosts.

389-390. Oberon, dressed like a forester, has often “made sport,” *i.e.* hunted with the “morning’s love,” Cephalus, the lover of Aurora, Milton’s “Attic boy.” (Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 122-124.)

391. *the eastern gate*. Cf. Milton, *L’Allegro*, 59:

“ Right against the eastern gate,
Where the great sun begins his state.”

392. Cf. Sonnet 33, “gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy.”

401-463. Puck leads Demetrius and Lysander in turn astray by counterfeiting to each the voice of the other. At last the two men and the two maids come separately to the same spot, and, over-wearied, lie down to sleep. Puck then applies the antidote to Lysander’s eye, that on awaking he may return to his first love, and leave Helena for Demetrius.

415. The Ff have here the stage-direction, *Shifting places*. Perhaps it belongs really to line 413, and signifies that Lysander comes in as Demetrius goes out. Demetrius accuses Lysander in line 423 of “shifting every place.”

418. The Ff have the stage-direction, *Lye down*.

421. *Ho, ho, ho!* Robin Goodfellow inherited this laugh from

the devil of the mysteries and moralities, who traditionally entered with it. In the prose *Life of Robin Goodfellow* the account of each of Robin's tricks ends with: "And Robin went away laughing *ho, ho, hoh.*"

451. *To your eye.* So Rowe, for the *your eye* of the Qq Ff.

461. Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. 2. 884:

"Our wooing doth not end like an old play;
Jack hath not Jill."

"All shall be well, and Jack shall have Jill," is an old proverb.

463. Another old proverb: cf. Ray's *English Proverbs*, "All is well, and the man hath his mare again." F 1 closes with the stage-direction, *They sleep all the Act; that is*, through line 142.

ACT IV — SCENE 1

The whole of this short Act is concerned with the resolution or disentanglement of the three stories which came to a crisis in the last. Ll. 1-48 of the first scene again put before us the contrast between Titania and Bottom, thus connecting the motive of this scene with that of Act iii, sc. 1. In ll. 49-106, the charm is taken off Titania's sight and she is reconciled to Oberon. In ll. 107-203, a similar reconciliation comes about between the human lovers; while in ll. 204-224, Bottom is restored to his normal aspect without any loss of self-satisfaction.

1-48. The contrast between Bottom's coarse tastes and the dainty delights which Titania proffers to him is humorously touched. The point is emphasized by making Titania speak in blank verse and Bottom in prose. Cf. Appendix H, § 29.

2. *amiable*. Literally *lovable*; here used rather of physical than mental qualities.

3. *musk-roses*. Cf. note on ii. 1. 252.

21. *leave your courtesy*, do not wait for elaborate compliment, put on your hat. Mustardseed is bowing and scraping before Bottom. Cf. the scene between Hamlet and Osric in *Hamlet*, v. 2. 81 ff. Bottom is adapting himself to the manners of courts.

25. *Cavalery Cobweb*. It was Peaseblossom who was to scratch (l. 7), and Cobweb was sent after a honey-bag (l. 10); but the alliteration of *Cavalery Cobweb*, parallel to that of "Monsieur Mustardseed," makes it probable that the slip was Shakespeare's.

31. *the tongs and the bones*. The "tongs" appear to have

been a rustic instrument, like a triangle, played with a key. The Ff here have the stage-direction *Musicke Tongs, Rurall Musicke*.

35. *a bottle of hay*. Not, as is generally said, a truss of hay, but a small quantity. Halliwell quotes a statement from a court-book of 1551, that the halfpenny bottle of hay weighed $2\frac{1}{2}$ pounds, and the penny bottle 5 pounds. The term survives in the proverbial phrase, "to look for a needle in a bottle of hay."

37-38. These lines as arranged in the Qq Ff do not scan. Pope treated them as prose, but Titania does not speak prose elsewhere in the scene. The arrangement in the text is Hanmer's, who, however, read *fetch thee thence* for the sake of the metre. But probably *hoard* should be scanned as a dissyllable; cf. Appendix H, § 15 (7).

41. *exposition*. Bottom seems to mean *disposition*.

44. *all ways*, i.e. in all directions. This is Theobald's conjecture for the *alwaies* of Qq Ff.

45-47. *So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist; the female ivy so
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.*

The punctuation here adopted implies that the woodbine and the honeysuckle are two different plants, which twine together; but Qq Ff have:

*So doth the woodbine, the sweet honeysuckle,
Gently entwist;*

If this is right, only one plant is spoken of, and "entwist" must either govern "the elm," or must be taken in the neuter sense of "twists itself together." Now, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, iii. 1. 7: *

"the pleached bower,
Where honeysuckles, ripen'd by the sun,
Forbid the sun to enter,"

is clearly the same as "the woodbine coyverture" of line 30 of the same scene. In our own play, the heavy scent of the honeysuckle gives the natural interpretation of "*luscious woodbine*" in ii. 1. 251; while in the most authoritative botanical books of the sixteenth century, the *Herbals* of Turner (1568), Lyte (1578), and Gerard (1597), the two names are always treated as synonymous. But then Shakespeare was not a botanist; the local names of plants vary considerably, and it is easy to show that many other climbers besides the honeysuckle were actually known as woodbine. Thus Taylor, the water-poet, distinguishes

"The woodbine, primrose, and the cowslip fine,
The honisuckle and the daffadil."

And the parallelism of the present passage makes it clear to my mind that two plants are meant, just as the ivy and the elm are two, and Titania and Bottom are two. A point is lost if Bottom is not compared to the "sweet honeysuckle." What plant, then, is here intended by the woodbine? Possibly the *Convolvulus sepium*, the great white bindweed or withywind. This is apparently the meaning of the name in Linaere's *Herball*, and we may compare Jonson's picture of a garden species of *Convolvulus* in *The Vision of Delight* (1617):

"Behold!

How the blue bindweed doth itself infold
With honeysuckle."

And possibly the *Clematis Vitalba*, or traveler's-joy, which is called *wooden-binde* in an eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon vocabulary (cf. Ellacombe, *Plant-lore of Shakespeare*).

46. *female ivy*. Shakespeare transfers to the ivy the classical notion of the vine as the wife of the husband elm which supports it. Cf. *Comedy of Errors*, ii. 2. 176:

"Thou art an elm, my husband, I a vine,
Whose weakness married to thy stronger state,
Makes me with thy strength to communicate."

52. *favours*, love-tokens. So Q 1; Q 2 F 1 have *savours*.

57. Cf. ii. 1. 14-15.

72. *a dream*. Cf. Introduction, p. xvi.

76. *Dian's bud*, the herb already spoken of in ii. 1. 184 and iii. 2. 366. The flower intended may be the *Agnus castus*, a blue or white verbenaceous flower, of which the old herbals say that it "wyll keep man and woman chaste." Cf. *The Flower and the Leaf*, ll. 472-475:

"That is Diane, goddesse of chastitè;
And, for bicause that she a maiden is,
In her hond the braunch she bereth, this
That *agnus-castus* men call properly."

Or it may be, and perhaps this is more likely, the rose, the proper flower of Elizabeth, who loved to be called Cynthia or Diana.

o'er. So Thirlby for the *or* of Qq Ff.

Cupid's flower, the love-in-idleness or pansy, already used on Titania in ii. 2. 27. The connection with Cupid is explained in ii. 1. 155 ff.

86. *these five*, the four Athenian lovers and Bottom. The *five* of the text is Thirlby's emendation for the *fine* of Qq Ff.

90. *rock the ground*. Cf. iii. 2. 25.

94. *prosperity*. So Q 1; Q 2 Ff have *posterity*.

100. *nightës*. Here, as in ii. 1. 7, the metre seems to require the old inflected genitive form. Cf. Appendix H, § 15 (1).

107. *forester*. The Elizabethan forester was rather a huntsman than a woodcutter.

108. *our observation*, i.e. of the "rite of May." Cf. l. 130.

111. Scan either

Un coupl' | in th' west' | ern val' | ley; let' | them go':

or as an Alexandrine. Cf. Appendix H, §§ 16, 18.

116. *Cadmus*, the mythical founder of Thebes, not elsewhere mentioned by Shakespeare.

118. Shakespeare might have learned from Ovid in what esteem the Spartan breed of hound was held in classical Greece.

123-131. Theseus, the practical man, the man of his hands, takes more delight in the sport of hunting than in intellectual pursuits. He is a noted huntsman already in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. The description of the hounds is an example of Shakespeare's own skill in woodcraft. Cf. the description of the points of a horse in *Venus and Adonis*, lines 295-300.

124. *sanded*, of sandy color.

128. *Each under each*, that is, some higher, some lower in note, like a chime of bells. The Elizabethan huntsman made much of the musical cry of his pack. Cf. Markham's *Country Contentments*: "If you would have your kennell for sweetnesse of cry, then you must compound it of some large dogges, that have deepe solemne mouthes, and are swift in spending, which must, as it were, beare the base in the consort, then a double number of roaring, and loud ringing mouthes, which must beare the counter-tenour, then some hollow, plaine, sweete mouthes, which must bear the meane or middle part; and soe with these three parts of musicke you shall make your cry perfect."

cry, the noise of hounds; and so used for a pack of hounds, as in *Coriolanus*, iii. 3. 110: "yon common cry of curs"; or a company of anything else, as in *Hamlet*, iii. 2. 289: "a cry of players."

143-144. St. Valentine's Day was the traditional time for the

mating of birds and the beginning of spring. Cf. Chaucer's *Parliament of Birds*.

164-180. Demetrius's fancy for Hermia is no less a freak of love, a bit of love's lawlessness, than that of Lysander for Helena, although we do not see it brought about by visible enchantment.

170. Lacks the unstressed syllable of the first foot. Such lines are not uncommon in the blank verse of Shakespeare's contemporaries. Cf. J. M. Manly in *Englische Studien*, xviii.

177. *like a sickness*. The grammatical apposition is somewhat loose, between a *sickness* and the substantive idea contained in *did I loathe this food*.

186. *for*, used in the sense of *for that*, *since*, or *because*, to introduce a subordinate sentence; cf. Abbott, § 151.

188. *three and three*, three men and three maids.

190. Cf. note on i. 1. 122.

193. *parted eye*, that is, with the two eyes not in focus, and so seeing the object separately.

196. *Mine own, and not mine own*, like a jewel picked up in the road, which the rightful owner may claim at any moment.

196-197. *Are you sure that we are awake?* So Qq; Ff omit this sentence, which certainly makes both lines difficult to scan: cf. Appendix H, § 18.

204-224. Bottom awakes and regards all that has happened since his transformation as a dream. But that he has been an ass he has no notion, he knows only that he has been adored by a most fair lady. Hence the irony of his situation. He would say in ll. 212-213, "Methought I was a gallant lover, and methought I had a garland on my head"; the audience know that it should be, "Methought I was — an ass, and methought I had — an ass's nole on."

208. *God's my life*. As in so many oaths, there is some ellipse here: perhaps the full phrase is "God's blessing on my life." Sometimes it is still further corrupted, as in *As You Like It*, iii. 5. 43, "'Od's my little life."

211. *an ass*. Cf. note on iii. 1. 119-120.

214. *a patched fool*. The traditional garb of the professional jester or court fool was a patched, parti-colored, or motley coat.

215-218. *eye . . . heard, . . . ear . . . seen*, etc. An absurd inversion belonging to the same type of humor as Bottom's characteristic misuse of words. There is a clear reference to *1 Corinthians*, ii. 9: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

220-221. *Bottom's dream . . . because it hath no bottom.* Mr. Fleay suggests that there is here a hit at Robert Greene, who called one of his poems *A Maiden's Dream*, for the apparent reason that there was no maiden in it.

224. *at her death*, that is, at Thisbe's death, as an epilogue. Theobald's *after death*, that is, after his death as Pyramus on the stage, is ingenious, and commends itself to many editors. But has not Bottom confused the incidents of his dream with those of the play, and identified Titania with Thisbe?

SCENE 2

Bottom is restored to his fellows, and so the fairy story, the lover story, and the rustic story are all alike happily resolved. This scene leads on to Act v, which is all concerned with the play within the play, and serves as an epilogue to the main action. The stage direction is, in Qq, *Enter Quince, Flute, Thisby, and the rabble*; in Ff, *Enter Quince, Flute, Thisbe, Snout, and Starveling*. But of course Thisby is Flute. The second speech is given to Flute in Qq and to Starveling in Ff. The speeches given to Flute in the text are given to Thisby in both Qq and Ff.

4. *transported*, carried away, used probably in connection with enchantment. Scot in the Fifth Book of his *Discovery of Witchcraft* mentions "transportations" of witches as well as "transformations" and "transubstantiations," and it is in this book that he tells of the man changed into an ass. Cf. Appendix A, § 6 (4). The modern penal sense is of later origin.

9-10. *any handicraft man in Athens*, which is much the same in the speaker's mind as *any man in the world*.

14. *a thing of naught*. Cf. *Hamlet*, iv. 2. 30:

"*Ham.*

The king is a thing —

Guild. A thing, my lord!

Ham.

Of nothing."

20. *sixpence a day*. It is suggested by Steevens that there is here another satirical hit at Thomas Preston (cf. i. 2. 11-12, note), who received from Elizabeth a pension of £20 a year, or about a shilling a day, for his performance before her in the play of *Dido* at King's College, Cambridge, in 1564. But there are several objections to Steevens's suggestion. Preston received a pension for a Latin oration, not for his part in a play; and there is no reason for believing that he was the Preston who wrote *Cambyses*. On the con-

itary, the Cambridge scholar would certainly have put his degree on his title page. Finally, £20 a year amounts to about 1s. 1d. a day — which does not suggest sixpence.

27. *courageous*. I suppose Quince means *encouraging*.

30-31. *no true Athenian*. Cf. *Ans.* xvii. 21. "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing." Bottom's anxiety at once to tell his tale and to keep up the mystery of it is very humorous.

39. *our play is preferred*. *Prefer* may mean either *choose* or *offer*, as in *Julius Caesar*, iii. 1. 28: "let him . . . prefer his suit to Caesar." If *preferred* here means *chosen for performance*, as the context and Bottom's excitement seem to indicate, there is a slight inconsistency, for the play is not definitely chosen until v. 1. 81. Perhaps it means *proffered*, as in the phrase *to prefer a request*.

ACT V

This Act is a kind of epilogue to the whole play. The principal actions are finished, but the presentation by the rustics of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe gives an opportunity for a burlesque treatment of the central theme. Here, too, young love, and the disobedience to parents which it provokes, are the causes of the calamity. Thus the Act bears the same relation to the rest of the play as the antimasque, the dance of clowns or satyrs, bears to the masque proper. It also serves Shakespeare to introduce certain criticisms on poetry and the drama, as they appear to Theseus, and to that side of Shakespeare which Theseus represents.

The opening lines (ll. 1-27) seem later in thought, style, and versification than the body of the play: cf. Introduction, p. x.

The closing lines (ll. 398-445) are of the nature of an epithalamium, or wedding-song, and doubtless have a particular reference to the occasion on which the play was first performed. See Introduction, p. ix.

2-22 Theseus is the practical man, more impressed with the realities of imagination than with its realities, and therefore, in this case at least, judging with an undue scepticism of the supernatural. Contrast the attitude of the impractical, speculative Hamlet (*Hamlet*, i. 5. 166):

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

And, in a sense, Shakespeare himself thinks with Theseus, for the fairy action is to him a dream, not true, though symbolical of truth.

3. *antique*, strange, fantastic. Murray derives the word from the Italian *antico*, a cavern adorned with grotesques; others regard it as identical with *antic*. In any case the spelling of the two words was not distinguished by the Elizabethans; in the present passage Q 1 has *antique*, Q 2 F 1 *anticke*.

6. In the mind of Theseus, his own deep but sane affection for Hippolyta is a thing apart from such passions and absurdities of youthful lovers as this play treats of.

seething brains. Cf. *Winter's Tale*, iii. 3. 64, "Would any but boiled brains of two-and-twenty hunt this weather?" and *Macbeth*, ii. 1. 38:

"A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain."

11. *Helen's beauty*. Helen of Troy became the type of beauty to the Elizabethans, from the time of her glorification in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.

a brow of Egypt, the dark features of an Egyptian, or gypsy. Darkness was a blemish in the age which adored the blond Elizabeth.

12-13. Cf. Drayton's description of Marlowe in the *Epistle to Reynolds*:

"that fine madness still he did retain,
Which rightly should possess a poet's brain."

19-20. The mere idea of a joy is enough incentive to a strong imagination to conjure up and believe in the actual presence of something which causes that joy.

26. *I.e.* holds together so *constantly*, or *consistently*, as almost to compel belief.

27. *admirable*, wonderful.

34. *after-supper*, not a separate meal from supper, but the last course of it, the *re-re-supper* or dessert.

38. Philostrate fills the position of Master of the Revels at Theseus' court. In Ff Egeus takes the place of Philostrate in this scene. Perhaps the part of Philostrate was omitted to save an actor.

39. *abridgement*, something to cut the hours short, a pastime. Hamlet uses the word in a rather different sense, when he says of the players in ii. 2. 439, "Look, where my abridgement comes."

He means that they are, as he calls them in ii. 2. 548, "the abstract and brief chronicles of the time."

42. *ripe*. So Q 1; F 1 has *rife*.

43. According to Ff Lysander reads the brief, and Theseus comments on it; and probably this represents the later stage-practice. The Qq make Theseus both read and comment.

44. Hercules was attacked by the Centaurs and vanquished them, when he was pursuing the Erymanthian boar. Line 47 seems to suggest this event rather than the battle with the Lapithæ, although Theseus, according to North, took part in the fight with the Lapithæ. Cf. Appendix C.

48-49. The story of Orpheus and his death at the hands of the Thracian Bacchanals is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Bk. xi; also in the last of Virgil's *Georgics*. Cf. Milton, *Lycidas*, 58-62:

"What could the muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The muse herself, for her enchanting son,
Whom universal Nature did lament;
When by the rout that made the hideous roar
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore."

51. *Thebes*. The conquest of Thebes by Theseus is touched upon in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. See also the passage quoted from Plutarch in Appendix C.

52-53. These lines have been taken to refer to the death of Robert Greene, chiefly on the grounds that he was an M.A. of both universities, and that he had died in beggary; but Greene was not distinguished for his learning, nor was he friendly to Shakespeare — in short, there is no evidence at all that Shakespeare was referring to him.

They have also been interpreted as an allusion to Spenser's *Tears of the Muses*, published in 1591. In Spenser's poem, however, "Learning" is not said to be "deceased" at all, much less "deceased in beggary." The Muses are mourning their own neglect and exile.

Consequently, the passage remains unexplained.

56-60. On the oxymoron in these lines, see note on i. 2. 11-12.

59. *wondrous strange snow*. Scan *wondrous* as a trisyllable, *wonderous*; cf. Appendix H, § 15 (8). Innumerable emendations have been suggested, in order to replace *strange snow* by an antithesis corresponding to *hot ice*, etc. But *strange* means *contrary to*

nature, and therefore "wondrous strange" sufficiently indicates the point of Theseus' criticism.

80. *stretch'd*, i.e. *strained*.

82-83. Cf. Jonson, *Cynthia's Revels*, v. 6. 79-80 of a masque:

"Nothing which duty, and desire to please,
Bears written in the forehead, comes amiss."

85. Hippolyta protests against seeing the play merely to mock it. Theseus suggests another view: We shall take what they mistake, find our amusement in their blunders; but at the same time we shall appreciate the spirit in which the play is proffered. In Theseus, as in Henry V, Shakespeare finds that sympathy with the mass of his subjects which makes him fit to be their king.

91-92. *noble respect Takes it in might, not merit*. If you regard it as a noble mind should, you will judge it as it might have been, as it was intended, not as it actually deserves.

93-99. *great clerks*. This seems to be an allusion to the elaborate addresses made during the progresses of Elizabeth at the gates of every town she entered, and in particular whenever she visited Oxford or Cambridge. At Warwick, which Elizabeth visited in 1572, when the Recorder had welcomed her, she replied, "Come hither, little Recorder. It was told me you would be afraid to look upon me, or to speak boldly; but you were not so afraid of me, as I was of you; and I now thank you for putting me in mind of my duty, and that should be in me" (Nicholls, *Progresses of Elizabeth*, vol. i). Cf. also *Pericles*, v. prol. 5, "Deep clerks she dumbs."

96. *periods, full stops*, as in the Prologue that follows.

106. *the Prologue*. This served a double purpose in Elizabethan drama. Sometimes it took the form of an apology for the shortcomings of the performance; sometimes it indicated the course of the plot. Here, as in the choruses which serve as prologues to the several Acts of *Henry V*, both uses are combined.

107. *Flourish of trumpets*. This signified that the play was about to begin. Cf. Decker, *The Gull's Horn-book* (1609), "Present not yourself on the stage (especially at a new play) until the quaking prologue hath got color in his cheeks, and is ready to give the trumpets their cue that he's upon point to enter."

The mispunctuation of the prologue is ingeniously contrived to pervert the sense. Rightly punctuated it would read thus:

"If we offend, it is with our good will
That you should think we come not to offend,

But with good will to show our simple skill.
 That is the true beginning of our end.
 Consider then; we come; but in despite
 We do not come. As minding to content you,
 Our true intent is all for your delight.
 We are not here that you should here repent you.
 The actors are at hand; and by their show
 You shall know all that you are like to know."

A similar use of mispunctuation is found in Nicholas Udall's play of *Roister-Doister* (1566).

108. On the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, see Introduction, p. xii, and Appendix D. The play may be taken as a burlesque of such an interlude as a pedantic schoolmaster might write for a rustic performance, and perhaps more generally of the type of tragedy in vogue before Marlowe. The rhyme, occasionally defective, the incorrect classical allusions, the wealth of ejaculation, the palpable devices to fill up the metre, the abuse of alliteration, and the inevitable bathos are all characteristic of the primitive kind of drama of which Richard Edwardes' *Damon and Pythias* is an example. Similar burlesques may be found in the *Masque of the Worthies* in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and in the declamation and performance of the strolling players in *Hamlet*, Act ii, sc. 2, and Act iii, sc. 2. Cf. also the account of *Narcissus* in Appendix E.

118. *stand upon points*. This has the twofold sense of (1) mind his stops, and (2) trouble about niceties.

123. *a recorder*, a flute with a hole bored in the side and covered with goldbeater's skin, so as to approach the effect of the human voice.

not in government, not produced with musical skill. Cf. *Hamlet*, iii. 2. 372, "Govern these ventages with your finger and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music."

126. The Ff here add the stage-direction, *Tawyer with a trumpet* (i.e. with a trumpeter) *before them*. This is by itself almost enough to show that F 1 was printed from a theatre-manuscript of the play. Tawyer or Tawier was no doubt the actor who played the part of Quince. The entry of his burial is found in the sexton's notebook at St. Saviour's, Southwark, as "William Tawier, Mr. Heminges man." Heminges was a leading member of the Chamberlain's Company.

131. *certain*. The obsolete accent on the last syllable is satirized.

147-148. Alliteration artfully used is one of the great beauties of English poetry; Shakespeare avails himself of it freely, but he satirizes the extraordinary abuse of it by the third-rate Elizabethan versifiers. This was partly due to the influence of Lyly's alliterative prose, partly to that of the earlier English poetry, such as *The Vision of Piers Plowman*. The Scottish poetry of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is also extraordinarily alliterative. With Shakespeare's criticism, cf. Sidney, *Astrophel and Stella*, 15:

"Ye that do dictionaries' method bring
Into your rimes running in rattling rows."

And Puttenham, *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), "Ye have another method of composing your metre nothing commendable, specially if it be too much used, and it is when one maker takes too much delight to fill his verse with words beginning all with a letter, as an English rimer that says, 'The deadly drops of dark disdain Do daily drench my due deserts.'" Holofernes, too, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, iv. 2. 57, "will something affect the letter, for it argues facility."

164-165. Note the shocking rhyme, *sinister, whisper*. *Sinister* of course means *left*. Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, iv. 5. 127:

"my mother's blood
Runs on the dexter cheek, and this sinister
Bounds in my father's."

199-200. *Limander . . . Helen*. Bottom mispronounces Leander, and Quince, in writing the play, has apparently confused Helen with Hero. Marlowe's adaptation of *Hero and Leander* from the pseudo-Musæus appeared in 1598. But possibly Alexander (Paris) and Helen are the pair of lovers intended.

201. *Shafalus . . . Procrus*. A mispronunciation of *Cephalus* and *Procris*. Cephalus was a faithful lover who shot his mistress by accident.

205. *Ninny's tomb*. Another absurd mistake for *Ninus' tomb*.

209. *the mural down*. This is Pope's conjecture; Qq read *the moon used*, and Ff, *the moral down*. But *mural* is not a word found elsewhere in Shakespeare, and perhaps we should be content with Collier's *the wall down*.

224. The lion's part is after all more than roaring (i. 2. 71). But this was necessitated by Bottom's proposal in iii. 1. 37.

226. *A lion-fell*, a lion's skin. This is Singer's emendation for *A lion fell* of Qq Ff. Rowe proposed *No lion fell*.

250. *greatest . . . of all the rest*. Either "greater than all the rest" or "greatest of all" would be a more exact way of conveying the intended notion. Cf. Abbott, § 409.

254. *in snuff*, a common phrase for *in a passion*.

261-264. The man in the moon was popularly represented with a bundle of thorns and a dog. He was variously explained as being either Isaac carrying the wood for his own sacrifice, or Cain sacrificing thorns as the produce of his land, or the man in *Numbers*, xv. 32, who was stoned for gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. The Cain theory may be found in Dante, *Inferno*, canto xx.

274. *moused*. The lion shakes the mantle, as a cat shakes a mouse.

279. *gleams*. This is Staunton's emendation for the *beams* of Qq F 1, the *streams* of the other Ff. The alliteration makes it probable.

293-294. A humorous way of saying "This passion, by itself, does not move." Steevens quotes an old proverb, "He that loseth his wife and sixpence hath lost a tester," *i.e.* A wife is no loss.

309. *Tongue* seems meaningless. I am inclined to accept the emendation *Sun*.

312. *No die, but an ace*. A pun on the sense of *die* as an ivory cube used at hazard, on which the lowest point, or *one*, is called an *ace*. There is a further pun in line 317 on *ace* and *ass*.

317. *prove an ass*. The humor of the jest lies in the memory which the audience has of Bottom's midnight adventure.

326-327. *he for . . . God bless us*. This is omitted in Ff, probably on account of a statute of James I passed in 1605, forbidding the use of the name of God in stage plays.

330. *means*, laments.

337. *lily lips*. Theobald read *lily brows*, thinking to get a rhyme to *nose*; but several lines in the burlesque are unrhymed, and the alteration spoils the point. With this passage cf. Peele, *Old Wives Tale* (1595):

"Her coral lips, her crimson chin —

Thou art a flouting knave. Her coral lips, her crimson chin!"

See also the passages quoted from *Narcissus* in Appendix E.

342. *green as leeks*. In *Romeo and Juliet*, iii. 5. 322, the Nurse accounts Paris's "green" eye a beauty.

343. *Sisters three*, the three Fates. With this passage compare *Damon and Pythias*:

"Ye furies, all at once
 On me your torments try:—
 Gripe me, you greedy griefs,
 And present pangs of death;
 You sisters three, with cruel hands
 With speed come stop my breath."

351. An allusion in Edward Sharpham's *The Fleire* (1607) preserves the fact that the old stage custom was for Thisbe in burlesques to stab herself, in her confusion, with the scabbard instead of the sword.

358-359. *the wall is down that parted their fathers*; just as in *Romeo and Juliet*, probably written or revised about the time this play was written, the death of the lovers heals the feud between the Capulets and the Montaguës.

360. *a Bergomask dance*. The dwellers in the Italian district of Bergamo, like the Bœotians in classical Greece, were looked upon as particularly rustic. Therefore a Bergomask dance is a dance of clowns.

379. *behows*. So Theobald, for the *beholds* of Qq Ff. Cf. *As You Like It*, v. 2. 118, "'Tis like the howling of Irish wolves against the moon."

391. *the triple Hecate*. The *tergmina Hecate* or *diva triformis* of classical myth, who was Diana on earth, Phœbe in the sky, and Hecate in the nether world.

393. Cf. Appendix A, § 6 (1).

396. On Puck as a house-spirit, see Appendix A, § 6 (2).

407. It would appear that a song has been lost here, or perhaps two, one here, and one at line 429; but Ff print ll. 430-445, given in Qq to Oberon, as *The Song*.

408-421. Cf. Milton, *Vacation Exercise*, 59-64:

"Good luck befriend thee, son; for, at thy birth,
 The fairy ladies danced upon the hearth;
 The drowsy nurse hath sworn she did them spy
 Come tripping to the room where thou didst lie;
 And sweetly singing round about thy bed,
 Strew all their blessings on thy sleeping head."

430. Shakespeare insists, by way of close, on the dream-like, symbolical character of his play.

440. *the serpent's tongue*, i.e. hissing, the reward of a bad play. Steevens quotes Markham, *English Arcadia* (1607), "After

the custom of distressed tragedians, whose first act is entertained with a snaky salutation." Cf. also *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. 1. 144, "An excellent device! so, if any of the audience hiss, you may cry, 'Well done, Hercules! now thou crushest the snake.'"

444. *your hands*, *i.e.* your applause. Cf. *The Tempest*, Epil. 10, "With the help of your good hands," and *All's Well*, v. 3. 340, "Your gentle hands lend us and take our hearts." The plays of the Latin comedy regularly ended with *Plaudite*.

APPENDIX A

SHAKESPEARE'S FAIRYLAND

§ 1. Shakespeare's fairies are self-contradictory. On the stage they are necessarily of human size, in the descriptions they are much less than Lilliputian. Nor does he seem at all troubled by the incongruity: Titania, who has cowslips for her gentlemen pensioners, can yet "wind" in her arms Bottom with his ass's head, as the ivy twists about the elm. Probably neither he nor his audiences troubled about the fact that his fairies, which have set the type for literary fairies ever since, were a composite of many elements:

(1) Oberon and Titania have a long literary history.

(2) Puck, Robin Goodfellow, comes straight from English folklore.

(3) Moth and his fellows are born of the poet's imagination, out of his love for Nature, with hints, however, from folklore.

§ 2. Oberon and Titania. The idea of these personages may have come to Shakespeare in many ways:

(1) He must have read the first three books of Spenser's *Faërie Queene* (published in 1590), in which Oberon is mentioned as the last king of the fairies before Gloriana (II. x. 75; cf. also II. i. 6).

(2) He must have seen Greene's play of James IV (first acted in 1589), in which Oberon takes part in a kind of enveloping action to the main plot.

(3) He probably saw a play called *Huon of Bordeaux*, which was acted at the Rose three times in December, 1592, and January, 1593;¹ and he may also have read the English version, by Lord Berners, of the French romance of that name (published in 1540), in which Auberon, King of the Fairies, is a dwarf three feet high.

(4) He may have seen, he must have heard about, or read a pamphlet describing the wonderful pageant given by the Earl of

¹ Cf. Henslowe's *Diary*.

Hertford to Elizabeth at Elvetham, in 1591, in which Aureola, Queen of the Fairies and wife of Oberon, takes part.¹

(5) That there was at least one last play about the King of the Fairies is suggested by the following allusions: Nash, in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon* (1589), says of the actors of the day, that, but for the poets, "they might have anticked it until this time up and down the country with the *King of Fairies*, and dined every day at the pease-porridge ordinary with *Delphrigus*." And the author (probably Henry Chettle) of the *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592), formerly attributed to Greene, introduces an old actor, who boasts that he was "as famous for *Delphrigus* and the *King of the Fairies*, as ever was any of my time." This evidence shows that, in introducing the King and Queen of the Fairies, Shakespeare simply made use of a common literary and stage tradition of his time.

§ 3. **The Names Oberon and Titania.** It has been seen that *Oberon* was used by Greene and Spenser, and that *Auberon* appeared in the Elvetham pageant and in the play and romance of *Huon of Bordeaux*. But Lord Berners translated from a French poem of the thirteenth century; and it seems certain that the fairy king in that poem, the "crooked shouldered" dwarf, is none other than the gnome Alberich (*Auberon* = *Alberon* = the French rendering of *Alberich*), the guardian of the treasure in the *Nibelungenlied*. Thus Shakespeare's Oberon can be traced back to Germanic saga so old that its origin is lost in antiquity.

The name *Titania* has not been found in Elizabethan literature before *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The only known source from which Shakespeare could have taken the name is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. There it is used as an epithet (1) of Diana (III, 173) and (2) of Circe, the enchantress (XIV, 376, 382). As Shakespeare used the *Metamorphoses* in his *Venus and Adonis* (published in 1593), and as both Diana and Circe had become fairies in his time (cf. § 5 (4) below), it is altogether likely that he found in Ovid's *Titania* exactly the name for his purpose. Thus his fairy queen goes back to Greek and Latin myth.

§ 4. **Puck, Robin Goodfellow.** Puck, the Puck, Robin, Robin Goodfellow, Hobgoblin, Hodgepoke (*i.e.* Hodge the Puck), and perhaps Hob Thrust — to give him his various names — seems to be of English origin. The names *Hob* and *Robin* are diminutives of *Robert*. Whether they go back to the medieval legend of *Robert*

¹ Published in Nicholls's *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, vol. ii. There were fairy queens in similar entertainments in 1578 and 1592.

the Devil, there is no evidence to show; but the name *Puck* originally meant *the devil*, as in *Piers Plowman*, B. xvi. 264-266:

“ Out of the pouke’s pondfolde no meynprise may vs feeche,
Tyl he come that I carpe of Cryst is his name,
That shal delyure vs some daye out of the deueles powere.”

And in Golding’s version of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, ix. 646:

“ The country where Chimæra, that same pouke
Hath goatish body, lion’s head and breast, and dragon’s tail.”

And in Spenser’s *Epithalamion*, 340:

“ Ne let the Pouke, nor other evill sprights,
Ne let mischievous witches with theyr charmes,
Ne let hob Goblins, names whose sence we see not,
Fray us with things that be not.”

The name has wide affinities. It appears as *Pug* and *Bug*. It is Reginald Scot’s *Puckle*, the Devonshire *Pixy*, the Cornish *Pisgy*, the Icelandic *Puki*; Ben Jonson’s *Puck-hairy*, and the *Pickle-häring* of German farce. A strayed traveler is *Pixy-led* in Devonshire and *Poake-ledden* in Worcestershire. The list might be increased indefinitely.

§ 5. **The Elizabethan Idea of Fairies.** Shakespeare’s contemporaries put together supernatural beings of all kinds and from all sources.

(1) Spenser groups together “elvish ghosts” and “friendly Faeries,” “many graces” and “lightfote Nymphes” (*Shepherd’s Calendar*, June, ll. 24-26); and again “joyous nymphes and lightfoote faeries” (*Tears of the Muses*, l. 31). To him *elf* was masculine and *fay* feminine (cf. *Faërie Queene*, II. x. 70-76, and III, ii. 26).

(2) Churchyard mentions Circe in the same breath with Robin Goodfellow and dancing fairies:

Strange farleis fathers told,
Of fiends and hags of hell;
And how that Circe, when she would,
Could skill of sorcery well.

And how old thin-faced wives,
That roasted crabs by night,
Did tell of monsters in their lives,
That now prove shadows light.

* * * * *

Of old Hobgobling's guise,
That walked like ghost in sheets,
With maids that would not early rise,
For fear of bugs and spreets.

Some say the fairies fair
Did dance on Bednall Green;
And fine familiars of the air
Did talk with men unseen.

And oft in moonshine nights,
When each thing draws to rest,
Was seen dumb shows and ugly sights,
That feared every guest

Which lodged in the house;
And where good cheer was great,
Hodgepoke would come and drink carouse
And munch up all the meat.

But where foul sluts did dwell,
Who used to sit up late,
And would not scour their pewter well,
There came a merry mate

To kitchen or to hall,
Or place where spreets resort;
Then down went dish and platters all,
To make the greater sport.

A further sport fell out,
When they to spoil did fall;
Rude Robin Goodfellow, the lout,
Would skim the milk-bowls all,

And search the cream-pots too,
For which poor milk-maid weeps,
God wot what such mad guests will do,
When people soundly sleeps.

— *A Handfull of Gladsome Verses given to the Queen's Majesty
at Woodstock this Progress (1592).*

(3) Nash identifies the supernatural beings of his day with those of ancient Greece:

"The Robin-good-fellows, Elfs, Fairies, Hobgoblins of our latter age, which idolatrous former days and the fantastical world of Greece ycleped Fauns, Satyrs, Dryads, and Hamadryads, did most of their merry pranks in the night. Then ground they malt, and had hempen shirts for their labors, danced in rounds in green meadows, pinched maids in their sleep that swept not their houses clean, and led poor travellers out of their way notoriously." (*Terrors of the Night*, 1594. Works, ed. Grosart, iii. 223, or McKerrow, 1904, I, 347.)

(4) Reginald Scot, whose *Discovery of Witchcraft* (published in 1584) Shakespeare must have known, is even more comprehensive: "But in our childhood our mothers' maids have so . . . fraid us with bull-beggars, spirits, witches, urchins, elves, hags, fairies, satyrs, pans, fauns, sylens, Kit with the canstick, tritons, centaurs, dwarfs, giants, imps, calcars, conjurors, nymphs, changelings, Incubus, Robin Goodfellow, the spoorn, the mare, the man in the oak, the hell wain, the fire-drake, the puckle, Tom Thumb, hobgoblin, Tom tumbler, boneless, and other such beings, that we are afraid of our own shadows." (Book vii, ch. xv, ed. Nicholson, 1886, p. 122). He also names Circe, Minerva, Diana, Herodias (Eurydice), and Sibylla or Sibylia (the classical Sibyl) as among the fairies.

§ 6. **Shakespeare's Debt to Scot.** While it is impossible to tell how much Shakespeare derived from Scot and how much from the common knowledge of folklore upon which Scot drew, we may observe that a good many features of Shakespeare's fairy world are found in Scot:

(1) The idea of a nocturnal rout of fairies with Diana as their queen. Scot speaks of "the lady of the fairies," called "Sibylla, Minerva, or Diana" (Bk. iii, ch. ii, p. 32). Elsewhere he quotes the statement of a general council that witches "ride abroad with Diana, the goddess of the Pagans, or else with Herodias, . . . and do whatsoever these fairies or ladies command" (Bk. iii, ch. xvi, p. 51). Cf. *M. N. D.* iv. 1. 100; v. 1. 393.

(2) The pranks of Robin Goodfellow. Scot tells of rough pranks: "Such jocund and facetious spirits are said to sport themselves in the night by tumbling and fooling with servants and shepherds in country houses, pinching them black and blue, and leaving bread, butter, and cheese sometimes with them, which, if they refuse to eat, some mischief shall undoubtedly befall them by the means of these Fairies." . . . (Bk. iii, ch. iv.)

He tells also of "labour at the quern" (*M. N. D.* ii. 1. 36) and of sweeping the floor¹ (*ibid.* v. 1. 396-397):

"*Virunculi terrei* are such as was Robin Goodfellow, that would supply the office of servants — specially of maids: as to make a fire in the morning, sweep the house, grind mustard and malt, draw water, etc.; these also rumble in houses, draw latches, go up and down stairs, etc. . . . There go as many tales upon this Hudgin in some parts of Germany, as there did in England of Robin Goodfellow" (*Discourse*, ch. xxi, p. 436).

"Indeed your grandam's maids were wont to set a bowl of milk before him, and his cousin, Robin Goodfellow, for grinding of malt or mustard, and sweeping the house at midnight; and you have also heard that he would chafe exceedingly, if the maid or goodwife of the house, having compassion of his nakedness, laid any clothes for him, besides his mess of white bread and milk which was his standing fee. For in that case he saith: What have we here? Hemton hamten, here will I never more tread nor stampen." . . . (Bk. iv, ch. x, p. 67.)

Further, he reports of witches: "They can also bring to passe, that chearne as long as you list, your butter will not come;" — voicing his own unbelief by adding at once — "especiallie, if either the maids have eaten up the creame; or the good wife have sold the butter before in the market" (*ibid.* Book i, ch. iv, p. 8).

(3) The power of giving false appearances to things (*M. N. D.*, iii. 1. 111-114). Scot says:

"The Fairies do principally inhabit the mountains and caverns of the earth, whose nature is to make strange apparitions on the earth, in meadows or on mountains, being like men and women, soldiers, kings, and ladies, children and horsemen, clothed in green, to which purpose they do in the night steal hempen stalks from the fields where they grow, to convert them into horses, as the story goes." . . . (*A Discourse Concerning Devils and Spirits*, appended to the *Discovery of Witchcraft*, Bk. ii, ch. iv, ed. Nicholson, p. 510.)²

(4) More specifically, the power to put an ass's head on a man. Scot has much to say on this matter. He mentions the power of witches to "transubstantiate themselves and others, and take the forms and shapes of asses, wolves, ferrets, coves, apes, horssees,

¹ Churchyard associates old wives and roasted crabs, and also speaks of skimming milk. Cf. p. 137 above.

² Book ii, however, seems to have been added to the work by an unknown person, in the third edition, 1665. But here there is no question of verbal borrowing by Shakespeare, and the ideas are old.

dogs, etc." (Cf. (3) above.) (Bk. i, ch. iv, *Discovery*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.) Again, he discusses at length the story of a man who was turned into an ass (Bk. v, chs. i-vii, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-83). On p. 79 he says: "Bodins asseheaded man must either eate haile or nothing: as appeareth in the storie" (cf. *M. N. D.* iv. 1. 35-36). As the very point of Bodin's story quoted by Scot is that the man was changed entirely, the sentence last quoted is curious in itself and may have been the exact starting-point for Bottom's plight. Elsewhere (*op. cit.*, pp. 257-258, Bk. xiii, ch. xix) Scot quotes a charm for putting an ass's head on a man, which may have reënforced the idea, though the fairies, of course, needed no such long process (cf. also Scot, *Discourse*, Bk. i, ch. xxvii, *op. cit.*, p. 447).

(5) The habit of stealing human children (*M. N. D.*, ii. 1. 21-23). Scot says: "Besides, it is credibly affirmed and believ'd by many, that such as are real changlings, or Lunaticks, have been brought by such spirits (*i.e.* fairies) and Hobgoblins, the true child being taken away by them in the place whereof such are left . . ." (*Discourse*, Bk. ii, ch. iv, *op. cit.*, p. 510).¹ Their stealing of children is also mentioned in the *Discovery* (Bk. iii, chs. xvi-xvii, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-53).

(6) The small size of the fairies. Although this has hitherto been supposed to have been Shakespeare's own idea, there are several hints in Scot which may have suggested it to him. Scot says that witches can enter houses "through chinks and little holes, where a flie can scarselie wring out" (*loc. cit.* above); and again: "They can go in and out at auger holes, & saile in an egge shell, a cockle or muscle shell" (*op. cit.*, p. 8, Bk. i, ch. iv).

(7) As Shakespeare's fairies are elemental, airy spirits (*M. N. D.* iii. 1. 157-158, 165) and are associated with stormy weather (ii. 1. 88 ff.), and can shake the earth (iii. 2. 25; iv. 1. 90) and bring fog (iii. 2. 355-357), so Scot says of his witches: "These be they (saith he) that raise haile, tempests, and hurtfull weather; as lightening, thunder, etc." After giving a list of authorities for this and other claims, he adds, "the testimonies of manie other grave authors in this behalfe.":

"And first *Ovid* affirmeth, that they can raise and suppress lightening and thunder, raine and haile, clouds and winds, tempests and earthquakes" (*op. cit.*, Bk. i, ch. iv, pp. 7-8).

(8) Like Shakespeare's fairies (*M. N. D.* ii. 2. 2, iii. 2. 101, iii. 2. 94, ii. 1. 174, 175-176, iv. 1. 102), "they should passe so farre in so little a space" (Scot, *op. cit.*, Bk. iii, ch. xvi, p. 51).

¹ Sprenger, the author of *Malleus Maleficarum*.

(9) They can make themselves invisible (*M. N. D.* ii. 1. 186). Scot (*op. cit.*, Bk. i, ch. iv, p. 8) says: "They can go invisible." (Cf. Bk. xv, chs. ix-x, pp. 340-342, where a charm is given to make one invisible.)

(10) Scot says of witches: "These can make horsse kicke, till they cast the riders" (*loc. cit.*, p. 7). Cf. *M. N. D.* ii. 1. 45-46.

(11) More significant is the statement: "These can alter men's minds to inordinate love or hate" (*loc. cit.*). It is noteworthy that although Oberon uses flowers to enchant and disenchant, the results are actually "inordinate love or hate" in each case.

These resemblances are surely enough to show that Shakespeare could have got suggestions for most of his details about the fairies from Scot. Two more points of great importance should be noted. Scot, in one of the passages in which we find allusion to (1) nocturnal meetings, (2) rapid movement, (3) power of transformation, (4) stealing children, (5) diminutive size, (6) "disquieting" the people of a house (as Puck did?), and (7) Diana as a fairy, uses the phrase "fairies or witches," as if the terms were interchangeable (Bk. iii, ch. xvi, p. 52). In a second passage, in which we find associated (1) control over the weather, (2) startling horses, (3) invisibility, (4) causing inordinate hate or love, (5) causing earthquakes, (6) changing themselves and others into asses or other animals, (7) diminutive size, and (8) interference with butter-making, he quotes *Malleus Malificarum* as naming three classes of witches, one only helpful, one only hurtful, and one that can both help and hurt. Is there not a hint of this idea in Oberon's benevolence and Puck's love of mischief?

§ 7. **Shakespeare's Debt to Others than Scot.** (1) As Shakespeare knew the *Faërie Queene*, it is not impossible that he owes to that poem something of the courtly atmosphere of his fairy world (although this feature may have come from his own observation); and it is even probable that he got from Spenser the idea of placing fairyland in "the farthest steppe of India" (ii. 1. 69, 124). Cf. *Faërie Queene*, II, x, lxx-lxxvi.

(2) Although Scot had so much to say about Robin Goodfellow, there is a passage in Nash's *Terrors of the Night* which curiously supplements him:

"hee [the devil] was wont to iest and sport wyth countrey people, and play the good fellowe amongst kitchin-wenches, sitting in an evening by the fire side making of possets, and come a woing to them in the likenes of a cooper, or a curmogionly purchaser & sometimes he would dresse himselfe like a Barbar, & wash and

shave all those that lay in such a chamber: otherwhile like a stale cutter of Queene hyne [Queenhithe], hee would iustle men in their owne houses, pluck them out of bed by the heeles . . ." (*Works*, ed. McKerrow, I, 367-368).

There is nothing in Scot that comes as near to *M. N. D.* ii. 1. 47-57, where, also, we have the "kitchin-wenches" drinking by the fire. The joke on the old woman is akin to pulling people out of bed by their heels, and in both cases the devil and the Puck appear in a series of different forms while they play tricks. According to Scot, they come in the night and perform various household tasks while people are asleep.

§ 8. **Shakespeare's Originality.** In the beautiful descriptions of the fairies and of the nature with which they are so closely associated, Shakespeare is elaborating his fancy of Queen Mab in *Romeo and Juliet*, i. 4. 53-95, and in both cases the delicate and exuberant play of imagination seems to be entirely his own.

The student who wishes to pursue the subject of fairy lore will find the following books, among others, useful: W. C. Hazlitt, *Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare* (1875). [This is a collection of illustrative texts, including those printed in Ritson's *Fairy Tales* (1831) and Halliwell's *Shakespeare Society Illustrations of the Fairy Mythology of a Midsummer-Night's Dream* (1845).] T. F. Thistleton Dyer, *Folk Lore of Shakespeare* (1883). T. Keightley, *Fairy Mythology* (1852). Drake, *Shakespeare and his Times* (1817). W. Bell, *Shakespeare's Puck* (1859). L. F. A. Maury, *Les Fées du Moyen Age* (1853). E. S. Hartland, *The Science of Fairy Tales* (1891). W. J. Thoms, *Three Notelets on Shakespeare* (1865). R. Kirk, *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies*; ed. A. Lang (1691-1893). Perrault, *Popular Tales*; ed. A. Lang (1888). D. M'Ritchie, *The Testimony of Tradition* (1890). T. Rhys, *Hibbert Lectures on Celtic Heathendom* (1888). K. Meyer and A. Nutt, *The Voyage of Bran and the Irish Vision of the Happy Otherworld* (1895). R. Scot, *The Discovery of Witchcraft*; ed. Brinsley Nicholson (1584-1886). B. C. A. Windle, *Introduction to E. Tyson's Pygmies of the Ancients* (1894). C. C. Hense, *Shakespeare's Sommernachtstraum Erläutert* (1851); *Untersuchungen und Studien* (1884).

APPENDIX B

ON THE WEATHER OF 1594

THE following contemporary records will illustrate the weather of this year, probably described by Titania in ii. 1. 81-114.

(1) From Stow's *Annals* (ed. 1631, pp. 766-769):

"In this moneth of March great stormes of winde ouerturned trees, steeples, barns, houses, &c., namely in Worcestershire, in Beaudly forrest many Oakes were ouerturned. . . . The 11 of April, a raine continued very sore more than 24 houres long, and withall, such a winde from the north, as pearced the wals of houses, were they never so strong. . . . This yeere in the month of May, fell many great showers of raine, but in the moneths of Iune and Iuly, much more: for it commonly rained euerie day or night, till S. Iames day, and two daies after together most extreemly; all which notwithstanding, in the moneth of August, there followed a faire haruest, but in the moneth of September fell great raines, which raised high waters, such as staid the carriages, and bare downe bridges, at Cambridge, Ware and elsewhere in many places. Also the price of grain grewe to be such, as a strike or bushell of Rie was sold for fve shillings, a bushell of wheat for sixe, seuen, or eight shillings, &c., for still it rose in price, which dearth happened (after the common opinion) more by meanes of ouermuch transporting, by our owne merchants for their private gaine, than through the vnseasonableness of the weather passed."

(2) From Dr. John King's *Lectures upon Jonas* (1595), Lecture ii. These lectures were delivered at York in 1594:

"The moneths of the year haue not yet gone about, wherin the Lord hath bowed the heauens, and come down amongst us with more tokens and earnestes of his wrath intended, then the agedst man of our land is able to recount of so small a time. For say, if euer the windes, since they blew one against the other, haue been more common, and more tempestuous, as if the foure endes of heauen had conspired to turne the foundations of the earth vpside downe; thunders and lightnings neither seasonable for the time, and withal

most terrible, with such effects brought forth, that the childe vnborne shall speake of it. The anger of the clouds hath been powred downe vpon our heads, both with abundance and (sauing to those that felt it with incredible violence: the aire threatned our miseries with a blazing starre; the pillars of the earth tottered in many whole countries and tracts of our Ilande; the arrowes of a woefull pestilence haue beene cast abroad at large in all the quarters of our realme, euen to the emptying and dispeopling of some parts thereof; treasons against our Queene and countrey wee have knowne many and mighty, monstrous to bee imagined, from a number of Lyons whelps, lurking in their dennes and watching their houre, to vndoe vs; our expectation and comfort so fayled vs in France, as if our right armes had beene pulled from our shoulders."

(3) From a note of Simon Forman's in MS. Ashmole, 384, quoted by Halliwell in his *Memoranda on Midsummer-Night's Dream*, p. 16:

"Ther was moch sicknes but lyttle death, moch fruit and many plombs of all sorts this yeare and small nuts, but fewe walnuts. This monethes of June and July were very wet and wonderfull cold like winter, that the 10. dae of Julii many did syt by the fyre, yt was so cold; and soe was yt in Maye and June; and scarce too fair dais together all that tyme, but yt rayned every day more or lesse. Yf yt did not raine, then was yt cold and cloudey. Mani murders were done this quarter. There were many gret fludes this sommer, and about Michelmas, thorowe the abundaunce of raine that fell sodeinly; the brige of Ware was broken downe, and at Stratford Boew, the water was never seen so byg as yt was; and in the lattere end of October, the waters burste down the bridg at Cambridge. In Barkshire were many gret waters, wherewith was moch harm done sodenly."

(4) From Thomas Churchyard's *Charity* (1595):

"A colder time in world was never seene:
The skies do lowre, the sun and moon wax dim;
Sommer scarce knowne, but that the leaves are greene.
The winter's waste drives water ore the brim
Upon the land; great flotes of wood may swim.
Nature thinks scorne to do hir dutie right,
Because we have displeasde the Lord of Light."

Both Knight and the Clarendon Press editors point out that these passages are not strictly in accordance with Titania's description,

because Stow speaks of " a faire harvest " in August, while Titania says

" the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard."

But surely one need not expect from Shakespeare the accuracy of a statistical return. These editors have not, however, drawn any argument as to the date of the play from the fact that Churchyard says in his preface, " A great nobleman told me this last wet summer, the weather was too cold for poets."

APPENDIX C

THE LIFE OF THESEUS

THE following extracts from Sir Thomas North's translation (1579) of Plutarch's *Life of Theseus* serve to illustrate several passages of the play. The references are to the pages of vol. i. of Mr. G. H. Wyndham's edition of North's *Plutarch* in the "Tudor Translations."

Page 31. "Ægeus, desiring (as they say) to know how he might have children, went unto the city of Delphes to the oracle of Apollo: where by Apollo's nun that notable prophecy was given him for an answer." . . . (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, i. 1. 70.)

Page 35. "The wonderful admiration which Theseus had of Hercules' courage, made him in the night that he never dreamed but of his noble acts and doings, and in the daytime, pricked forwards with emulation and envy of his glory, he determined with himself one day to do the like, and the rather, because they were near kinsmen, being cousins removed by the mother's side." . . . (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. 1. 47.)

Page 36. "And so going on further, in the straits of Peloponnesus he killed another, called Sinnis surnamed Pityocamtes, that is to say, a wreather, or bower of pine-apple trees: whom he put to death in that self-cruel manner that Sinnis had slain many travellers before.

. . . This Sinnis had a goodly fair daughter called Perigouna, which fled away, when she saw her father slain: whom he followed and sought all about. But she had hidden herself in a grove full of certain kinds of wild pricking rushes called stœbe, and wild sparage, which she simply like a child intreated to hide her, as if they had heard and had sense to understand her: promising them with an oath, that if they saved her from being found, she would never cut them down, nor burn them. But Theseus finding her, called her, and sware by his faith he would use her gently, and do her no hurt, nor displeasure at all. Upon which promise she came out of the bush, and lay with him, by whom she was conceived of a goodly boy, which was called Menalippus. Afterwards Theseus married her unto one Deioneus, the son of Euritus the Æchalian." . . . (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ii. 1. 78.)

Page 39. "The rather to give Ægeus occasion and mean to know him: when they brought the meat to the board, he drew out his sword, as though he would have cut with all, and shewed it unto him. Ægeus seeing it, knew it straight, . . . and after he had inquired of him, and asked things, he embraced him as his son." . . . The name Egeus, however, is found also in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*.

Pages 45-47. "Furthermore, after he was arrived in Creta, he slew there the Minotaur (as the most part of ancient authors do write) by the means and help of Ariadne: who being fallen in fancy with him, did give him a clue of thread, by the help whereof she taught him, how he might easily wind out of the turnings and cranks of the Labyrinth. And they say, that having killed this Minotaur, he returned back again the same way he went, bringing with him those other young children of Athens, whom with Ariadne also he carried afterwards away. . . . They report many other things also touching this matter, and specially of Ariadne: but there is no troth nor certainty in it. For some say, that Ariadne hung herself for sorrow, when she saw that Theseus had cast her off. Others write, that she was transported by mariners into the Isle of Naxos, where she was married unto Cénarus, the priest of Bacchus: and they think that Theseus left her, because he was in love with another, as by these verses should appear:

'Ægles, the Nymph, was loved of Theseus,
Which was the daughter of Panopeus.' . . .

Other hold opinion, that Ariadne had two children by Theseus." . . . (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ii. 1. 80.)

Pages 55-57. "Touching the voyage he made by the sea Major, Philochorus, and some other hold opinion, that he went thither with Hercules against the Amazons: and that to honour his valiantness, Hercules gave him Antiopa the Amazon. But the more part of the other Historiographers, namely, Hellanicus, Pherecides, and Herodotus, do write, that Theseus went thither alone, after Hercules' voyage, and that he took this Amazon prisoner, which is likeliest to be true. For we do not find that any other who went this journey with him, had taken any Amazon prisoner beside himself. Bion also the Historiographer, this notwithstanding saith, that he brought her away by deceit and stealth. For the Amazons (saith he) naturally loving men, did not fly at all when they saw them land in their country, but sent them presents, and that Theseus enticed her to come into his ship, who brought him a present: and so soon as she was aboard, he hoised his sail, and so carried her away. . . .

But Clidemus the Historiographer . . . saith that . . . the Athenians . . . were . . . repulsed by the Amazons. . . . Afterwards, at the end of four months, peace was taken between them by means of one of the women called Hippolyta. For this historiographer calleth the Amazon which Theseus married, Hippolyta, and not Antiopa." . . . (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, i. 1. 16; ii. 1. 80.)

Page 59. "Albeit in his time other princes of Greece had done many goodly and notable exploits in the wars, yet Herodotus is of opinion, that Theseus was never in any one of them: saving that he was at the battle of the Lapithæ against the Centauri." . . . (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. i. 44.)

Page 59. "Also he did help Adrastus King of the Argives, to recover the bodies of those that were slain in the battle, before the city of Thebes. Howbeit it was not, as the poet Euripides saith, by force of arms, after he had overcome the Thebans in battle; but it was by composition." . . . (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. i. 51.) But this line may have come from Chaucer; cf. note on i. 1. 16. See also *Canterbury Tales*, ll. 859-1004, especially ll. 998 and 1001-1002:

"That Thesëus, the noble conquerour,

Whan that this worthy duc, this Thesëus,
Hath Creon slayn, and wonne Thebes thus." . . .

Pages 60-61. "Pirithous married Deidamia, and sent to pray Theseus to come to his marriage, to visit his country, and to make merry with the Lapithæ. He had bidden also the Centauri to the feast: who being drunk, committed many lewd parts, even to the forcing of women. Howbeit the Lapithæ chastised them so well, that they slew some of them presently in the place, and drove the rest afterwards out of all the country by the help of Theseus, who armed himself, and fought on their side. Yet Herodotus writeth the matter somewhat contrary, saying that Theseus went not at all until the war was well begun: and that it was the first time that he saw Hercules, and spake with him near the city of Trachina, when he was then quiet, having ended all his far voyages, and greatest troubles. They report that this meeting together was full of great cheer, much kindness, and honourable entertainment between them, and how great courtesy was offered to each other." . . . (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. i. 44.)

While it is doubtless true that Shakespeare had read North's *Life of Theseus*, the only lines that he seems to have borrowed from that source are ii. 1. 77-80, and v. 1. 44 and 47.

APPENDIX D

ON THE LEGEND OF PYRAMUS AND THISBE

It is worth while to reprint the two versions of this legend which Shakespeare may have had directly before him.

(i) From Arthur Golding's translation¹ of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (ed. 1587), iv. 55-166:

This tale (because it was not stale nor common) seeméd good
To her to tell: and thereupon she in this wise begun,
Her busy hand still drawing out the flaxen thread she spun: —

Within the town (of whose huge walls so monstrous high and thick,

The fame is given Semiramis for making them of brick)

Dwelt hard together two young folk, in houses joined so near,
That under all one roof well nigh both twain conveyéd were.

The name of him was Pyramus, and Thisbe call'd was she,

So fair a man in all the East was none alive as he.

Nor ne'er a woman, maid, nor wife in beauty like to her.

This neighbourhood bred acquaintance first, this neighbourhood first
did stir

The secret sparks: this neighbourhood first an entrance in did show
For love, to come to that to which it afterward did grow.

And if that right had taken place they had been man and wife,

But still their parents went about to let which (for their life)

They could not let. For both their hearts with equal flame did burn,

No man was privy to their thoughts. And for to serve their turn,

Instead of talk they uséd signs: the closelier they suppressed

The fire of love, the fiercer still it ragéd in their breast.

The wall that parted house from house had riven therein a *cranny*,

Which shrunk at making of the wall: this fault not marked of any

Of many hundred years before (what doth not love espy?)

These lovers first of all found out, and made a way whereby

To talk together secretly, and through the same did go

Their loving *whisp'rings* very light and safely to and fro.

¹ A reprint of the 1567 edition edited by Gollanez for the King's Library (1904) shows a very few and unimportant verbal differences.

Now as at one side Pyramus, and Thisbe on the other
Stood often drawing one of them the *pleasant breath* from other :
O spiteful wall (said they) why dost thou *part* us lovers thus :
What matter were it if that thou permitted both of us
In arms each other to embrace : or if thou think that this
Were over-much, yet mightest thou at least make room to kiss.
And yet thou shalt not find us churls : we think ourselves in debt
For *the same piece of courtesy* in vouching safe to let
Our sayings to our friendly ears thus freely come and go.
Thus having where they stood in vain complained of their woe,
When night drew near they bade adieu, and each gave kisses sweet
Unto the parget on their side the which did never meet.
Next morning with her cheerful light had driven the stars aside,
And Phœbus with his burning beams the dewy grass had dried,
These lovers at their wonted place by fore-appointment met,
Where after much complaint and moan they covenanted to get
Away from such as watchéd them, and in the evening late
To steal out of their fathers' house and eke the city gate.
And to th' intent that in the fields they strayed not up and down,
They did agree at *Ninus' tomb* to meet without the town.
And tarry underneath a tree that by the same did grow :
Which was a fair high *mulberry* with fruit as white as snow,
Hard by a cool and trickling spring. This bargain pleased them
both,
And so daylight (which to their thought away but slowly goeth)
Did in the Ocean fall to rest, and night from thence doth rise.
As soon as darkeness once was come, straight Thisbe did devise
A shift to wind her out of doors, that none that were within
Perceived her : and muffling her with clothes about her chin,
That no man might discern her face, to Ninus' tomb she came
Unto the tree : and set her down there underneath the same.
Love made her bold. But see the chance, there comes besmeared
with blood
About the chaps, a Lioness all foaming from the wood,
From slaughter lately made of kine to staunch her bloody thirst
With water of the foresaid spring. Whom Thisbe, spying first
Afar by moonlight, thereupon with fearful steps gan fly
And in a dark and irksome cave did hide herself thereby.
And as she fled away for haste she let her mantle fall,
The which for fear she left behind not looking back at all.
Now when the cruel lioness her thirst had staunchéd well,
In going to the wood she found the slender weed that fell

From Thisbe, which with bloody teeth in pieces she did tear.
 The night was somewhat further spent ere Pyramus came there,
 Who seeing in the subtle sand the print of lion's paw,
 Waxed pale for fear. But when that he the *bloody mantle* saw
 All rent and torn: one night (he said) shall lovers two confound,
 Of which long life deserved she of all that live on ground.
 My soul deserves of this mischance the peril for to bear.
 I wretch have been the death of thee, which to this place of fear
 Did cause thee in the night to come, and came not here before.
 My wicked limbs and wretched guts with cruel teeth therefore
 Devour ye, O ye lions all that in this rock do dwell.
 But cowards use to wish for death. The slender weed that fell
 From Thisbe up he takes, and straight doth bear it to the tree,
 Which was appointed erst the place of meeting for to be.
 And when he had bewept and kissed the garment which he knew,
 Receive thou my blood too (quoth he), and therewithall he drew
 His sword, the which among his guts he thrust, and by and by }
 Did draw it from the bleeding wound, beginning for to die, }
 And cast himself upon his back, the blood did spin on high }
 As when a conduit pipe is cracked, the water bursting out
 Doth shoot itself a great way off, and pierce the air about.
 The leaves that were upon the tree besprinkled with his blood
 Were dyed black. The root also, bestained as it stood
 A deep dark purple colour, straight upon the berries cast. }
 Anon scarce ridded of her fear with which she was aghast, }
 For doubt of disappointing him comes Thisbe forth in haste, }
 And for her lover looks about, rejoicing for to tell
 How hardly she had 'scaped that night the danger that befell.
 And as she knew right well the place and fashion of the tree
 (As which she saw so late before:)-even so when she did see
 The colour of the berries turned, she was uncertain whether
 It were the tree at which they both agreed to meet together.
 While in this doubtful state she stood, she cast her eye aside,
 And there beweltered in his blood her lover she espied
 Lie sprawling with his dying limbs: at which she started back,
 And looked pale as any box, a shuddering through her strake,
 Even like the sea which suddenly with whizzing noise doth move, }
 When with a little blast of wind it is but touched above. }
 But when approaching nearer him she knew it was her love,
 She beat her breast, she shrieked out, she tore her golden hairs,
 And taking him between her arms did wash his wounds with tears.
 She mixed her weeping with his blood, and kissing all his face

(Which now became as cold as ice) she said in woeful case:
 Alas! what chance, my Pyramus hath parted thee and me? }
 Make answer, O my Pyramus: it is thy Thisbe, even she }
 Whom thou dost love most heartily that speaketh unto thee; }
 Give ear and raise thy heavy head. He, hearing Thisbe's name,
 Lift up his dying eyes, and, having seen her, closed the same.
 But when she knew her mantle there, and saw his scabbard lie
 Without the sword: Unhappy man, thy love hath made thee die:
 Thy love (she said) hath made thee slay thyself. This hand of mine
 Is strong enough to do the like. My love no less than thine
 Shall give me force to work my wound. I will pursue thee dead,
 And, wretched woman as I am, it shall of me be said,
 That like as of thy death I was the only cause and blame,
 So am I thy companion eke and partner in the same.
 For death which only could, alas! asunder part us twain,
 Shall never so dissever us but we will meet again.
 And you the parents of us both, most wretched folk alive,
 Let this request that I shall make in both our names belyve
 Entreat you to permit that we, whom chaste and steadfast love,
 And whom even death hath joined in one, may, as it doth behove,
 In one grave be together laid. And thou unhappy tree,
 Which shroudest now the corse of one, and shalt anon through me
 Shroud two, of this same slaughter hold the sicker signs for ay }
 Black be the colour of thy fruit and mourning like alway, }
 Such as the murder of us twain may evermore bewray. }
 This said, she took the sword, yet warm with slaughter of her love,
 And setting it beneath her breast did to the heart it shove.
 Her prayer with the gods and with their parents took effect,
 For when the fruit is throughly ripe, the berry is bespect
 With colour tending to a black. And that which after fire
 Remained, rested in one tomb as Thisbe did desire.

(ii) From I. Thomson's *A New Sonet of Pyramus and Thisbie* to the [tune of] *Downe right Squier* in Clement Robinson's *A Handeful of Pleasant Delites* (1584).

You dames, I say, that climb the mount of Helicon,
 Come on with me, and give account what hath been done.
 Come tell the chance ye Muses all,
 and doleful news,
 Which on these lovers did befall,
 which I accuse.

In Babylon not long ago
a noble prince did dwell,
Whose daughter bright dimm'd each one's sight
so far she did excel.
Another lord of high renown
who had a son,
And dwelling there within the town
great love begun :
Pyramus this noble knight
I tell you true :
Who with the love of Thisbie bright
did cares renew :
It came to pass their secrets was
beknown unto them both :
And then in mind they place do find
where they their love unclothe.
This love they use long tract of time,
till it befell
At last they promised to meet at prime
by Minus' well,
Where they might lovingly embrace
in love's delight.
That he might see his Thisbie's face
and she his sight.
In joyful case, she approached the place
Where she her Pyramus
Had thought to view'd but was renew'd
to them most dolorous.
Thus while she stays for Pyramus
there did proceed
Out of the wood a *lion* fierce,
Made Thisbie dread ;
And as in haste she fled away
her mantle fine
The lion tare instead of prey,
till that the time
That Pyramus proceeded thus
and see how lion tare
The mantle this of Thisbie his,
he desperately doth fare.
For why he thought the lion had
fair Thisbie slaine.

And then the beast with his bright blade
he slew certain :
Then made he moan and said alas.
(O wretched wight)
Now art thou in a woful case
for Thisbie's bright :
O gods above, my faithful love
shall never fail this need :
For this my breath by fatal death
shall weave *Atropus' thread*.
Then from his sheath he drew his blade
and to his heart
He thrust the point, and life did vade
with painful smart.
Then Thisbie she from cabin came
with pleasure great,
And to the well apace she ran
there for to treat :
And to discuss to Pyramus
of all her former fears.
And when slain she found him truly,
she shed forth bitter tears.
When sorrow great that she had made
she took in hand
The bloody knife to end her life
by fatal band.
You ladies all peruse and see
the faithfulness,
How these two lovers did agree
to die in distress :
You Muses wail, and do not fail,
but still do you lament
Those lovers twain who with such pain
did die so well content. (ll. 64-201.)

Chaucer's *Legenda Tesbe Babilonie, Martiris*, in his *Legend of Good Women* (circ. 1384), follows Ovid closely. But for the "envious wall" of Golding (l. 28), Chaucer has

"Thus wolde they seyn : — 'allas ! thou wikked wal,'"
with which compare v. 1. 181.

APPENDIX E

ON THE PLAY OF "NARCISSUS"

IN 1893, Miss Margaret L. Lee of St. Hugh's Hall, Oxford, published from the Rawlinson Poet. MS. 212, a play called *Narcissus, a Twelfth Night Merriment*. This was played at St. John's College, Oxford, in 1602, and professes to have been acted by "youths of the Parish." It is a burlesque, much in the vein of the Pyramus and Thisbe interlude in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, of the story of Narcissus, told in the third book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It is clearly due to the influence of our play, for at line 494 occurs the stage direction, *Enter one with a buckett and boughes and grasse*. This impersonation of a Well is palpably modelled on that of Wall and Moonshine. The following verbal reminiscences of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* may also be noted:

(1) line 109: "It is a most condolent tragedye wee shall move." Cf. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, i. 2. 29: "I will condole in some measure;" and i. 2. 42-43: "a lover is more condoling."

(2) line 239: "O furious fates, O three thread-thrumming sisters." Cf. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. 1. 289-291:

"Approach, ye Furies fell,
O Fates, come, come,
Cut thread and thrum."

(3) line 266: "Phibbus walls." Cf. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, i. 2. 37: "Phibbus' car."

(4) The blunders of "Late-mouse" for "Latmus" (l. 279) and "Davis" for "Davus" (l. 400) remind us of "Limander," "Shafalus and Procrus," and "Ninny's tomb."

(5) lines 341-347:

"O thou whose cheeks are like the skye so blewe,
Whose nose is rubye, of the sunnlike hue,
Whose forehead is most plaine without all rinkle
Whose eyes like starrs in frosty night doe twinkle,

Most hollowe are thy eyelidds, and thy ball
Whiter than ivory, brighter yea withall,
Whose ledge of teeth is farre more bright then jett is,
Whose lipps are too, too good for any lettice."

And again, lines 677-8:

" But oh remaine and let thy christall lippe
Noe more of this same cherrie water sipe."

Cf. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. 1. 337-339.

(6) lines 408-411:

" *Florida.* As true as Helen was to Menela,
So true to thee will be thy Florida.
Clois. As was to trusty Pyramus truest Thisbee
So true to you will ever thy sweete Clois bee."

Cf. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. i. 199-202.

APPENDIX F

ON THE ALLEGORY IN ii. 1. 148-168

THERE can be no doubt that in "the imperial votaress," the "fair vestal throned by the west," Shakespeare intended a graceful compliment to Elizabeth, the "virgin Queen." Two fantastic attempts have been made to interpret the rest of the passage as an allegory in a similar vein.

(1) Warburton suggested that by the mermaid was intended Mary Queen of Scots, so called (1) "to denote her reign over her kingdom situate in the sea; and (2) her beauty and intemperate lust;" that the dolphin is her husband, the Dauphin of France; that the "rude sea" is Scotland, and that the falling stars are the English nobles who ruined themselves in her cause.

(2) Halpin¹ explained the mermaid and the stars as part of the pageant and the fireworks at the "Princely Pleasures" with which the Earl of Leicester entertained Elizabeth at Kenilworth in 1575. Of these festivities several contemporary accounts exist, and it is quite possible that Shakespeare may himself have been present at them as a boy of 11, since Kenilworth is at no great distance from Stratford. During this visit Leicester attempted to win Elizabeth's hand, while he was at the same time carrying on an intrigue with Lettice, Countess of Essex, whom he afterwards married. Halpin believed that these events were referred to in the play, and that the Countess of Essex was the "little western flower." He found another secret history of Leicester's love-affairs in Lyly's *Endymion*, in which he considered that the Countess figures as *Floscula*.

Halpin's explanation of the mermaid and the stars is certainly more plausible than Warburton's, and there may very likely be some allusion in the passage to Leicester's unsuccessful wooing of Elizabeth. But the identification of the "western flower" with Lady Essex is absurd. It was not until 1598 that Elizabeth went through even a show of reconciliation with her; and no poet in his senses would have followed the compliment to Elizabeth by an allusion to her successful rival.

¹ *Oberon's Vision*. By N. J. Halpin. (Shakespeare Society, 1843.)

APPENDIX G

ON W. BETTIE'S TITANA AND THESEUS

IN ii. 1. 74-80, Oberon taunts Titania with an old love-story between her and Theseus. Oberon himself, according to romance, was the son of Morgan la Fay and Julius Cæsar, but I can find no hint of any relations between Theseus and the Fairy Queen before Shakespeare. Probably he invented it in order to link two of the stories of his plot together. The following noticeable entry occurs in the *Stationers' Register* for 1608:

13 Augusti

Master Pavier. Entered for his copy under the hands of Master Wilson and the Wardens, A book, being *A History of Tytana and Theseus*.

If an edition was published in 1608, it does not appear to have survived. The work probably passed, with Pavier's other copyrights, to Edward Brewster and Robert Bird in 1626. An edition was published in 1636, of which a few copies are in the British Museum, the Bodleian, and elsewhere. The book is described on the title-page as *The History of Titana and Theseus*, and the author's name is given as W. Bettie. It is a regular Elizabethan love-pamphlet, written in the style of Lyly and Greene. But it is disappointing to find that there is nothing about the Queen of the Fairies in it. Titana is the daughter of Meleager, King of Achaia, with whom Theseus falls in love, and whom he ultimately marries after much parental opposition, and various wanderings, in the course of which he is entertained by the Landgrave of Hesse, and is landed by a Venetian merchant on the coast of Bohemia. There is no sign in plot or language that the novel either inspired or was in any way inspired by *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. But it is just possible that if, as is likely enough, W. Bettie translated from an earlier Italian original, Shakespeare may have been struck by the conjunction of names, and have borrowed that of Titana or Titania for his Fairy Queen. The likelihood that he got it from Ovid,

Metamorphoses, iii. 171, is certainly diminished by the fact that Golding does not there preserve it in his translation. (See Appendix A, § 3.)

But, in the absence of further evidence, it is as easy to conclude that Bettie took the association of the two names, if nothing more, from Shakespeare's play.

APPENDIX H

METRE

1. BLANK VERSE

§ 1. The metre commonly used by Shakespeare is called blank verse. It consists — typically — of a series of unrhymed lines, each of which contains ten syllables stressed alternately, beginning with the second, thus: ¹

Behold', the time' has come' for thee' and me'.

§ 2. A stressed syllable is one that is uttered with more force, more emphasis, as we say, than an unstressed syllable. In ordinary speech we stress words in two ways: (1) according to the pronunciation of the word itself, when it consists of more than one syllable, and (2) according to the sense which we wish to emphasize. Take, for example, a prose passage from the play:

Quin. You', Nick Bot'tom, are set' down' for Pyr'amus.

Bot. What' is Pyr'amus? a lov'er, or a ty'rant?

Quin. A lov'er, that kills' himself' most' gal'lant for love.¹

The rules of pronunciation require stresses thus: Bot'tom, Pyr'amus, lov'er, ty'rant, himself', gal'lant; while the meaning to be brought out requires additional stresses on: you', set' down', what', kills', and love'.

§ 3. In writing blank verse, the problem is: to put into every line (1) five alternate stresses, for metrical reasons, and without doing violence to (2) the natural stresses required for correct pronunciation, or (3) the emotional stresses required to bring out the meaning. In the fine adjustment of these three kinds of stresses lies the charm of good blank verse.

¹ A line that begins with an unstressed syllable is said to have *rising rhythm*. A combination of one or more unstressed syllables with one or more stressed is called a *foot*; a foot of two syllables of which the second is stressed is called an *iambus*; a line of five feet is called *pentameter*; a line of five *iambi* is called *iambic pentameter*. Blank verse, then, is *iambic pentameter unrhymed*.

§ 4. In the example given in § 1, the three kinds of stresses fall on the same five syllables; but this entire agreement happens only now and then; nor is it desirable that it should happen, as the effect would be of the most wooden monotony. The beauty of blank verse depends upon the range and skill of the variations which are brought into the pattern of the five-stressed line.

§ 5. These variations are of three kinds: (1) the arrangement and force of stresses; (2) the number of unstressed syllables; (3) the number and arrangement of pauses¹ within the line, and the omission of the end-pause.

§ 6. **The Arrangement and Force of Stresses.** If the first speech of the play is read like prose, with the natural pronunciation of each word, and the emphasis so distributed as to bring out the meaning, the stresses would be marked as follows:

<i>The.</i> Now', fair Hippo'lyta, our nup'tial hour'	4
Draws' on' apace'; four' hap'py days' bring in'	7
Anoth'er moon': but, O', methinks', how slow'	5
This old' moon' wanes'! she lin'gers my desires',	5
Like to a step'-dame' or a dow'ager	3
Long' with'ering out' a young' man's' rev'enue.	6

Thus it appears that the number of stresses according to the emotional emphasis to bring out the meaning ranges from 3 to 7, that only two lines have 5 stresses, and that in only one do these 5 stresses always alternate with unstressed syllables.

In line 4 the arrangement may be expressed thus:²

× ∠ | ∠∠ || × ∠ | ×× | × ∠ || (according to sense),

instead of thus:

× ∠ | × ∠ | × ∠ | × ∠ | × ∠ || (according to verse pattern).

To read the line effectively, the reader must bear in mind both the sense stress and the verse stress, and so combine them that the sense stress will be uppermost although the verse stress is never forgotten. This effect is reached simply by varying the degree or force of the stress on different syllables. In line 4, this is accomplished by throwing less stress on *moon* than would be given in prose, and more on *my*; in this way, the two kinds of stresses are harmonized.

¹ For a pause within the line due to an interruption or break in the thought, the Latin term *cæsura* is sometimes used.

² An unstressed syllable is represented by ×, a stressed syllable by ∠.

§ 7. The position of stressed and unstressed syllable may be reversed in any foot except the fifth, but most commonly this inversion is found in the first foot:

Hap'py | be The' | seus, our | renoun' | ed duke' (i. 1. 20).

It is also found in the third or fourth foot, apparently to balance the change in the first:

1st and 3d. There'fore | the winds', | pip'ing | to us' | in vain' (ii. 1. 88).

1st and 4th. Met' we | on hill', | in dale', | for'est | or mead' (ii. 1. 83).

1st and 2d. Fol'low ! | nay', I'll | go with' | thee, check' | by jole' (iii. 2. 338).

The inversion, however, is rarely found in any other foot:

2d. As wild' | geese' that | the creep' | ing fowl' | er eye' (iii. 2. 20).

3d. With feign' | ing voice' | ver'ses | of feign' | ing love' (i. 1. 31).

4th. To am'or | ous Phil' | lida. | Why' art | thou here' (ii. 1. 68).

It is found rarely in all the feet except the fifth:

Rath'er | your' eyes | must' with | his' judge | ment look' (i. 1. 57).¹

§ 8. Nor are the variations confined to inversion of the accent. Stressed and unstressed syllables are often grouped in such a way that it is necessary for the reader sometimes to add a slight stress, for the sake of the verse, where the sense requires none, or to lighten, for the sake of the verse, a word which would naturally be accented for the sake of meaning. A good example of this double levelling, to keep the balance between verse-rhythm and sense-rhythm, is:

x x ˘ x x x x
and the | quaint ma- | zes in | the wan- | ton green || (ii. 1. 99).

§ 9. As each line contains — theoretically — ten syllables, and as the number of stresses according to sense is not usually five, but ranges between two and six, and is commonly three or four (in the first hundred lines of the play, I counted 30 lines with 5 stresses, 33 with 4, 27 with 3, 4 with 2, and 6 with 6), it follows that almost

¹ The rhythm in which a stressed syllable is followed by an unstressed (— x) is called *falling* or *trochaic rhythm*, and the foot is called a *trochee*.

any grouping of stressed and unstressed syllables is possible, although not more than three unstressed syllables as a rule are found together.

§ 10. When the third foot consists of two unstressed syllables, it divides the line into two equal parts, and thus gives a markedly antithetical effect:

$\overset{x}{\text{Your}} \overset{\text{˘}}{\text{bus}} \mid \overset{x}{\text{kin'd}} \overset{\text{˘}}{\text{mís}} \mid \overset{x}{\text{tress}} \parallel \text{and} \mid \overset{x}{\text{your}} \overset{\text{˘}}{\text{war}} \mid \overset{x}{\text{rior}} \overset{\text{˘}}{\text{love}} \parallel (\text{ii. 1. 71}).$

§ 11. It is common to find two unstressed syllables in the last foot, where the pause gives a certain emphasis to the second:

$\overset{\text{˘}}{\text{Go}}, \overset{\text{˘}}{\text{one}} \mid \overset{x}{\text{of}} \overset{\text{˘}}{\text{you}}, \parallel \overset{\text{˘}}{\text{find}} \overset{\text{˘}}{\text{out}} \mid \overset{x}{\text{the}} \overset{\text{˘}}{\text{for}} \mid \overset{x}{\text{ester}} \parallel (\text{iv. 1. 107}).$

§ 12. The stress due to the natural accent of a word does not vary, as a rule, or enter into the problem of rhythm. The few exceptions in this play are given in the notes.

§ 13. The Number of Unstressed Syllables. While each normal line has only five stressed syllables, the number of unstressed syllables may vary apparently from five to ten. In dealing with these extra syllables, however, several points must be kept in mind:

§ 14. Differences between Modern English and American Pronunciation. In England to-day there is a general tendency to elide or to slur unaccented vowels, so that *mulberry* (v. 1. 149), pronounced *mulbry*, *promontory* (ii. 1. 149), pronounced *promontry*, *medicine* (iii. 2. 264), pronounced *medisin*, are perfectly regular.

§ 15. Differences between the English of Shakespeare's Time and the English of To-day. In Shakespeare's time, there was admittedly sufficient license in the pronunciation of certain groups of sounds to give great flexibility to the metre. Sounds that we consider distinct could be run together and sounds that we consider single could be broken into two syllables, and many words admitted of two pronunciations according to the exigencies of the verse, as for instance:

And with' her pers' (olage, her' tall per sonage' (iii. 2. 292).

(1) Syncope by elision or slurring occurs in any syllable consisting of unaccented *e* plus consonant, as *-os*, *-on*, *-es*, *-en* as a sign of the superlative is usually uncontracted, *-est*, *-en*, but the vowel can always be given its value if it is needed for the scansion.

(2) Syncope may take the place of almost any unaccented short vowel between two consonants, especially if one of these is *l*, *n*, or *r*; but, as before, the vowel sound may be kept if it is needed:

Thus: changeling (iv. 1. 62), but changeling (ii. 1. 23); personage and personage (iii. 2. 292), votāress (ii. 1. 123), but votāress (ii. 1. 163); spirit (usually), but either spirit or sprite in pronunciation (i. 1. 13 and probably ii. 1. 1). Cf. ii. 1. 33, and v. i. 388, 400.

(3) Many common words in colloquial combinations are run together when the metre demands, as: is't, be't, for't, she's, we're, you about, i'faith, etc.

(4) Two adjacent unstressed vowels are often merged, as: re-*reant* (iii. 2. 409). If the first is an *i* or *e*, it becomes a consonantal *y*, as: *companion* (i. 1. 15), *obedience* (i. 1. 37), *warrior* (ii. 1. 71), *India* (ii. 1. 69), *spaniel* (ii. 1. 203), *beauteous* (i. 1. 104). The combination *ti* produces a sound resembling *sh*, as in *patiently* (ii. 1. 140), *vexation* (i. 1. 22), *nuptial* (i. 1. 1), but we have also *nuptiäl* (v. 1. 75). With forms in *-tion*, *-sion*, the contraction appears to be normal, except before a marked pause.

(5) Similarly an unstressed vowel is often absorbed into an adjacent stressed vowel or diphthong:

Thus *prayers* (i. 1. 197), *showers* (i. 1. 245), *fīre* (*fier*) (ii. 1. 5), *squire* (ii. 1. 131), *toward* (iii. 1. 81), *bēing* (iii. 2. 69), *hour* (i. 1. 1), *ōur* (i. 1. 15); but *vōyāge* (ii. 1. 134), *iron* (*iern*) (ii. 1. 196), *cōward* (iii. 2. 421).

(6) Certain consonants can be elided when they come between two vowels, and the vowels then coalesce into a single syllable. These consonants are *v* and *th*.

v. In accordance with this principle *never* becomes *ne'er*, and *over* becomes *o'er*; possibly also we get *e'en* for *even*, *se'en* for *seven* (as in *sen-night*), and *gi'en* for *given*; but cf. (ii), (b).

th. The most usual example is *whether*, which must be pronounced *we'er* in i. 1. 69; iii. 1. 156; iii. 2. 81; but we also appear to have another in *either* (ii. 1. 32; ii. 2. 156).

(7) An unstressed prefix, especially a single vowel, is often elided: 'long for *along* (iii. 2. 339), 'nointed for *anointed* (iii. 2. 351), 'scaped for *escaped* (iv. 2. 21), 'tide for *betide* (v. i. 205).

(8) A long vowel or diphthong is sometimes split up into two syllables, one stressed and one unstressed. Thus *hoard* becomes *hoärd* (iv. 1. 38). The word *fairy* is generally treated as a disyllable in the play; but in ii. 1. 58 it is a trisyllable, going back to what is really the older pronunciation, *fäëry*.

(9) Before an *l* or *r* a short, unstressed vowel sound is occasionally introduced to make an extra syllable:

Thus we have:

(a) Before *l* — *jugg*[e]ller (iii. 2. 282).

(b) Before *r* — *wond*[e]rous (v. 1. 59). The forms *through*, *thorough*, now confined to different senses, are used indiscriminately by Shakespeare. Cf. ii. 1. 3 and ii. 1. 106.

(10) The accented syllable of a word sometimes differs from modern usage, as in *perse'ver* (iii. 2. 237); and the same word may be differently accented according to the exigencies of the metre.

§ 16. **The Feminine Ending.** This is an extra syllable, occurring most commonly after the stress of the fifth foot. It was used extensively by Shakespeare in his later plays, but in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* it is found but rarely except in v. 1. 1–28, in which eight or ten lines have the feminine ending. For this reason, among others, the passage, it is thought, did not belong to the original version but was added before it was printed. The kind of syllables regarded as light enough to be added without disturbing the rhythm is shown by the following list: *speak'* (of), l. 1; *po'*(et), l. 7; *fran'*(tic), l. 10; *E'*(gypt), l. 11; *roll'*(ing), l. 12; *hea'*(ven) or perhaps *heav'n*, l. 13; *no'*(thing), l. 16; *o'*(ver), l. 23; *toge'*(ther), l. 24; *admira'*(ble) or *admira'bl*, l. 27.

This feminine ending also occurs after the mid-line pause; but in this play there seem to be only three or four examples of it:

After 2d foot. That is, | the mad(man): | the lo | ver, all | as
fran(tic) (v. 1. 10).

After 3d foot. Not for | thy fair | y king(dom). | Fairies, |
away (ii. 1. 144).

After 4th foot. Therefore | be out | of hope, | of ques(tion), | of
doubt (iii. 2. 279).

After 1st foot. Uncou(ple) | in th' wes | tern val | ley; let |
them go (iv. 1. 111).

The last case is doubtful. Perhaps we should read: *Uncoupl'*.

§ 17. **Monosyllabic Feet.** Occasionally a line is mutilated by the omission of the unstressed syllable of one foot. The place of this syllable may generally be considered to be filled up by a gesture or dramatic pause. Like all other irregularities, this is rare in our play. It occurs in:

— Ho, | ho, ho! | Coward, | why comest | thou not? (iii. 2. 421),
where the laugh may be taken as a rough metrical equivalent for two whole feet; in —

For part | ing us, | — O, | is all | forgot? (iii. 2. 201),

where the third foot is filled out with a sob; and apparently in:

Mel | ted as | the snow, | seems to | me now (iv. 1. 170);

but probably this line is corrupt (cf. note *ad loc.*).

§ 18. **Long and Short Lines.** Lines are sometimes found with more or less than the normal five feet.

Six-foot lines, sometimes called *Alexandrines*, occur rarely, possibly twice in the play, iii. 2. 279, and iv. 1. 111.

There are also a few shorter lines of various lengths. Here, too, a pause, or something of the kind, may often be regarded as filling up the gap.

Two feet. And kill | me too (iii. 2. 49).

Three feet. Takes it | in might, | not mer(it) (v. 1. 92).

Four feet. I know | a bank | where the wild | thyme blows
(ii. 1. 249).

Short addresses, commands, and ejaculations can be treated in plays where they abound as extra-metrical altogether.

On the three four-foot lines ii. 1. 14, 42; iii. 2. 100, cf. § 25.

In iv. 1. 196-197 we have:

Hel. Mine own, and not mine own.

Dem. Are you sure
That we're awake. It seems to me . . .

§ 19. **The Number and Arrangement of Pauses.** (1) Normally the mid-line pause or cæsura comes after the second or third foot, or in the third foot:

End of 2d foot. As well | possess'd; || my love | is more | than
his (i. 1. 100).

End of 3d foot. Either | to die | the death || or to | abjure
(i. 1. 65).

In the 3d foot. My mind | did lose | it. || But, | Deme | trius,
come (i. 1. 114).

(2) Sometimes the mid-line pause is omitted or is so slight that it is scarcely felt:

If I | refuse | to wed | Deme | trius (i. 1. 64).

(3) It may stand at other points in the line, but when there is a pause very near the beginning, there is usually another, to balance it, near the end:

In the 4th foot. Made love | to Ne | dan's daugh | ter, || Hel | ena
(i. 1. 107).

End of 1st foot. Ay me! || for aught | that I | could e | ver read
(i. 1. 132).

In 1st foot and end of 3d. Now, || fair | Hippol | yta, || our
nup | tial hour (i. 1. 1).

§ 20. In Shakespeare's early plays there is usually a pause at the end of the line; but in the later plays he more and more carried his thought over from line to line. Such a connection is called an *enjambement*, and the first of the two lines is said to be *run on*, as opposed to *end-stopped*. Consider, for instance, v. 1. 12-17:

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

Here the last line and the first two are end-stopped, the third, fourth, and fifth run on. Of course it is largely a matter of degree: the enjambement is more or less marked, according as it is affected by various conditions, the weight of the syntactical parts separated, the closeness of the syntactical connection, the presence of feminine rhythm, and the like. The effect of this redistribution of pauses is to destroy the independence of the single line by making it a member of a harmoniously arranged group, a period or verse-paragraph. Through this a less monotonous rhythm becomes possible.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* there are comparatively few enjambements. On the other hand, there is some use of the *stichomuthia* of Greek tragedy, that is, a succession of end-stopped lines, rhymed or unrhymed, in rapid dialogue, in which the speaker changes at the end of each line. This has a somewhat lyrical, antiphonic effect. Cf. i. 1. 136-140, 194-201; ii. 2. 84-87; iii. 2. 134-136, 184-185, 254-255, 318-319.

2. THE FORM OF A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

§ 21. Omitting broken lines, couplets, and other small groups of lines which are interspersed, we find that the form of the play may be blocked out as follows:

- i. 1. 1-170 — blank verse; 171-251 — heroic couplets.
- i. 2 — prose, with comic stanza 33-40.
- ii. 1. 1-17 — irregular, mainly eight-syllabled rhyming couplets; 18-59 — heroic couplets; 60-248 — mainly blank verse.
- ii. 2. 1-8 — blank verse, 9-26 — lyric; 27-34 — short couplets; 39-65 — heroic couplets; 66-83 — short couplets; 84-156 — heroic couplets.
- iii. 1 — mainly prose, with quotations from the interlude and lyrics — 128-131, 133-136, and heroic couplets — 155-165. (168-177 have only one rhyme.)
- iii. 2. 1-99 — mainly heroic couplets; 100-121 — short couplets; 122-135 — stanzaic rhyme; 137-194 — heroic couplets; 195-347 — mainly blank verse; 348-395 — heroic couplets; 396-399 — short couplets; 401-430 — heroic couplets; 431-447 — stanzaic rhymes with short irregular metres in 437-441 and 448-462.
- iv. 1. 1-42 — mainly prose with stanza 1-4; 43-73 — blank verse; 74-77 — stanza; 78-88 — mainly heroic couplets; 89-96 — monorhyme; 97-106 — short couplets; 107-203 — mainly blank verse; 204-224 — prose.
- iv. 2 — prose.
- v. 1. 1-106 — mainly blank verse; 108-197 — mainly alternate rhyme, with some prose; 200-207 — heroic couplets; 208-276 — mainly prose; 277-311 — short irregular metre; 312-330 — prose; 331-354 — short irregular metre; 355-369 — prose; 370-375 — blank verse; 378-445 — short couplets.

§ 22. As to the relative proportions of each form, we find that not far from half the play is rhymed, not much more than a third is in blank verse, while about a sixth is prose. Blank verse, then, is merely the foundation upon which Shakespeare, in this instance, not only deviates into prose for special effects, but also builds an elaborate and varied structure of rhymes, which are used as follows:

3. RHYME¹

§ 23. The commonest form of rhymed verse used is the *rhymed heroic*, composed, like blank verse, of decasyllable iambic lines, but with the last accented syllables rhyming. This is scattered about in single couplets and longer passages amongst the blank verse,

¹ Cf. J. Heuser, *Der Coupletreim in Shakespeare's Dramen*. (*Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, vol. xxviii, p. 177; xxiv-xxx, p. 235.)

and it is not always possible in this play, as it usually is with the far rarer rhymed verse of later plays, to assign a definite reason for its use in any given place. But it appears to be used:

(1) In single couplets to finish off a scene or speech, or section of a speech, in blank verse. Rhyme was used by Shakespeare for this purpose almost to the end of his career. Probably it pleased the actors, who liked an effective curtain, and it may even have served to call attention to the cues. As examples, see v. 1. 104-105; 376-377. Sometimes two or three successive couplets are so used.

(2) In markedly lyrical or emotional passages. Thus in act i, sc. 2, the entry of Helen, at l. 180, coincides with a change from blank verse to rhyme, and so with the more passionate love-scenes throughout.

(3) In epigrammatic or pointedly humorous passages, *e.g.* in Puck's witty description of Titania's plight (iii. 2. 6-40). In ii. 1. 268, Puck caps a line of the interlude with a mocking rhyme. So Titania caps herself in iii. 1. 206.

§ 24. Heroic rhyme is generally arranged in couplets, but in this play we often get (1) triplets, (2) quatrains (*e.g.* iii. 2. 342-344; ii. 2. 35-38; iv. 1. 1-4), (3) sextains, or quatrains followed by clinching couplets (*e.g.* iii. 2. 431-436; 442-447); and (4) triplets plus couplets (*e.g.* iii. 1. 202-206). In iii. 1. 167-177 the same rhyme is repeated ten times, and in iv. 1. 89-96 another is repeated eight times.

§ 25. Many of the variations described in §§ 4-20 occur also in heroic rhyme. Thus we have feminine rhymes; *e.g.*:

Were the world mine, Demetrius being ba(ted),
The rest I 'ld give to be to you transla(ted) (i. 1. 190-191).

In three passages, all spoken by Puck, we get a couplet made up of a four-foot and a five-foot line; *e.g.*:

I must | go seek | some dew | drops here
And hang | a pearl | in ev | ery cow | slip's ear (ii. 1. 14-15).

Cf. also ii. 1. 42-43; iii. 2. 100-101.

§ 26. Much of the speech of the fairies, especially the enchantments, consists of short rhyming lines of various lengths, in a falling rhythm, *i.e.* a rhythm in which the stressed syllable precedes the unstressed. Thus:

O'ver | hill', | o'ver | dale',
 Thor'ough | bush', | thor'ough | brier',
 O'ver | park', | o'ver | pale',
 Thor'ough | flood', | thor'ough | fire',
 I' do | wan'der | ev'ery | where',
 Swift'er | than' the | moon'ès | sphere';
 And' I | serve' the | fai'ry | queen',
 To dew' | her orbs' | upon' | the green'.
 The cow' | slips tall' | her pen' | sioners be':
 In' their | gold' coats | spots' you | see';
 Those' be | ru'bies | fai'ry | fa'vours,
 In' those | freck'les | live' their | sa'vours (ii. 1. 2-13).

This metre is specially used by Shakespeare (*e.g.* in *Macbeth*) for the speeches of supernatural beings. It should be noted that

(1) Iambic lines (*e.g.* ii. 1. 9-10) are intermingled with the trochaic ones, for the sake of variety.

(2) The final trochee is often *catalectic*; that is, the unstressed syllable is wanting.

The trochaic metre is commonly a four-foot one. Puck's speech in iii. 2. 448-463 begins with one-foot, two-foot, and three-foot lines, and ends with a long doggerel line:

The man' | shall have' | his mare' | again', | and all' | shall' be | well'.

Such doggerel lines are common in the earliest comedies, but soon disappear.

§ 27. When songs are introduced, as in ii. 2. 9-24 and iii. 1. 128-136, they are of course in various rhymed lyric metres.

§ 28. **The Interlude.** The metres of the interlude, introduced into Act i, sc. 2, Act iii, sc. 1, Act v. sc. 1, require separate mention. They are

(1) Rhymed heroics, in couplets, quatrains, or sextains.

(2) Two-foot and three-foot iambics (v. 1. 281-292, 300-311, 331-354).

(3) Six-foot iambics (iii. 1. 95-98).

The latter two metres appear to be in parody of the cruder pre-Shakespearean tragedies. In the same spirit the heroic verse is made stiff and awkward. It is, of course, dramatically desirable to differentiate the style of the interlude from that of the rest of the play.

■

4. PROSE¹

§ 29. Shakespeare uses prose in his earlier plays chiefly for comedy and for the dialogue of vulgar characters. Where prose and verse are mingled, it is generally to point a contrast between the persons speaking. Thus in iii. 1. 123-206, and in iv. 1. 1-48, Bottom speaks in prose, Titania in verse. The clowns speak throughout in prose, firstly because they are clowns, and secondly to provide a background for the interlude. For the sake of a similar background, even Theseus and the wedding company speak in prose in v. 1. 108-369; returning to the statelier blank verse when the Bergomask dance is over.

5. METRE AS AN EVIDENCE OF DATE

§ 30. Shakespeare's manner of writing was undergoing constant modification throughout his life, and therefore the evidence of style, and especially of metre, helps in some degree to determine the respective dates of the plays. As has been pointed out from time to time in this essay, the metre of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is that of an early play. As compared with the later ones, it has few contractions (§ 15), feminine endings (§ 16), or enjambements (§ 20). Lines of irregular length are rare (§§ 17, 18). The free use of rhyme (§ 22), which is generally a mark of early work, does not prove much here, because Shakespeare would probably at any time in his life have used rhyme in writing what is practically a masque. On the other hand, the comic doggerel, which marks the very earliest comedies, is absent.

Many attempts have been made to fix the dates of the plays more precisely on metrical grounds, by estimating the prevalence of particular metrical characteristics in each, in numerical terms. The figures thus obtained, and the tests based upon them, seem to me so very misleading that I have not thought it worth while to give any of them here.²

¹ Cf. Delius, *Die Prosa in Shakespeare's Dramen* (*Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, v, p. 227).

² The student who wishes to pursue the matter may be referred to König, *Der Vers in Shakspeare's Dramen*, ch. vii, to H. Conrad's paper in the German Shakespeare Society's *Jahrbuch*, vol. xxxi, and to an essay by the Rev. F. G. Fleay in Ingleby's *Shakspeare, the Man and the Book*, Part ii.

GLOSSARY

aby (iii. 2. 175, 335), pay for, the M.E. *abyen*, A.S. *abyrgan*. This word, often spelt, as here in Q 2 F 1, **abide**, must be distinguished from **abide** in the sense of *await*, which is the M.E. *abiden*, A.S. *abidan*.

adamant (ii. 1. 195), the lodestone, a stone possessed of magnetic properties, with also some idea of the hardness of the diamond. The word is derived from the Gr. *ἀδάμας*, unconquerable (*ἀ-*, not *δαμάειν*, to tame), and was originally applied to the diamond and other hard stones. It was probably transferred to the lodestone on account of its unconquerable attraction for iron. **Diamond** is a corruption of the same word.

an (i. 2. 76, etc.), a shortened form of **and** in the special sense of *if*. The spelling *an* was rarely used in Shakespeare's time. Except in **an't** it occurs only once in F 1; but modern editors have conveniently appropriated it to the conditional sense of the word. *And* or *an* is often strengthened, as in ii. 2. 153; iii. 2. 78, by the addition of *if*. In i. 2. 85 Bottom uses *an 'twere* in the sense of "*as if* it were."

anon (iii. 2. 18), at once, the A.S. *on án*, in one (moment).

Antipodes (iii. 2. 55), dwellers on the other side of the earth; from Gr. *ἀντί*, over against, *πούς*, a foot.

apricock (iii. 1. 169), apricot. Both forms are from the Portuguese *albricoque*, the Eliza-

bethan directly, the modern through the French *abricot*. The early history of the word is curious; the Portuguese borrowed it from the Arabic *al-birquq*, *alburquq*, of which *al* is merely the definite article, while *birquq* = Med. Gr. *πραϊόκιον*. This in its turn came from the Latin *praecoxus* or *praecox*, "early ripe."

ay me (i. 1. 132), alas, woe is me; the O.Fr. *aymi*, Ital. *ahimé*, Span. *ay de mí*, Gr. *οἶμοι*. The *me* is here, like the Gr. *μοι*, a dative.

barm (ii. 1. 38), yeast.

bated (i. 1. 190), excepted; another form of **abate**, which means, literally, beat down, from the L.L. *battere*.

bay (iv. 1. 117), hunt with dogs, lit. bark at, another form of **abay**, from O.Fr. *bayer*. We speak of a hunt baying, and of a stag at bay, the Fr. *aux abois*.

be-, a form of the preposition **by**, used as a prefix, intensifies or otherwise modifies, often very slightly, the word to which it is joined. **belike** (i. 1. 130), by what is likely; hence, perhaps. Often it simply forms a transitive verb, as in **behowls** (v. 1. 379), *howls at*.

beshrew (ii. 2. 54), curse, lit. bring evil upon; from *be* + *shrew*, evil.

beteem (i. 1. 131), yield, supply; from *be* + *teem*, think fit, connected with Dutch *betamen*, Germ. *ziemen*, Eng. *seemly*. Thus the primary sense of

beteem is *allow, suffer*. Cf. *Hamlet*, i. 2. 14:

That he might not *beteem* the winds
of heaven
Visit her face too roughly.

beteene [*v. r. beteeme*].

broach'd (*v. 1. 146*), pierced;
from M.E. *broche*, O.Fr. *broche*
or spit, a sharp, pointed rod.

bully (iii. 1. 7; iv. 2. 18), a colloquial term of affection or respect, especially in low life, chiefly implying good fellowship; said to be connected with the Germ. *buhle*, Dutch *boel*, lover.

canker (ii. 2. 3), a worm. The *canker-blossom* of iii. 2. 282 may either be (1) a synonym for *canker*, or (2) the flower of the dog-rose. Cf. note *ad loc.*

cheer (iii. 2. 96), countenance.

chiding (iv. 1. 119), loud confused noise. Cf. *Othello*, ii. 1. 12: "The chidden billow seems to pelt the clouds."

childing (ii. 1. 112), bearing children, fruitful. So the hen-and-chickens daisy is sometimes called the *childing* daisy.

coil (iii. 2. 339), disturbance. Cf. *Much Ado*, v. 2. 98: "Yonder's old coil at home."

collied (i. 1. 145), blackened with coal, darkened. The word recurs in the F 1 of *Othello*, ii. 3. 206:

And passion, having my best judgement collied,
Assays to lead the way.

con (i. 2. 102), get to know; A.S. *cunnian*, a desiderative form of *cunnan*, to know.

coy, vb. (iv. 1. 2), caress. Cf. Warner, *Albion's England*, vi. 30:

And while she coys his sooty cheeks,
or curls his sweaty top.

darkling (ii. 2. 86), in the dark. Cf. *Lear*, i. 4. 237: "So, out

went the candle, and we were left darkling."

dowager (i. 1. 5, 157), a widow with a jointure or *dowage*, charged on an estate. *Dowage* is from the Fr. *douer*, Lat. *dotare*, endow, + the termination *age*.

dulcet (ii. 1. 151), sweet.

eke (iii. 1. 97), also. Used by Shakespeare only in burlesque. It is probably connected with the verb, *eke*, augment, increase.

eyne (i. 1. 242, etc.), a plural form of *eye*, used generally for the sake of rhyme. The plural ending *-ne* or *-en*, the A.S. *-an*, is retained in such words as *children*, *oxen*, *kine*, etc.

fantasy (i. 1. 32; v. 1. 5), or *fancy* (i. 1. 155; ii. 1. 164; v. 1. 25), *fancies* (i. 1. 118), a corrupt form of the same word: (1) imagination; (2) love, especially the imaginative love of youth.

favour, (1) good-will, graciousness; (2) (i. 1. 186), countenance, looks, apparently as expressive of graciousness, though *ill favoured* came to be used also; (3) (ii. 1. 12; iv. 1. 52), a flower, ribbon, or other token of good-will, given as a mark of favor.

fell, subst. (v. 1. 228), skin. Cf. note *ad loc.*

fell, adj. (ii. 1. 20; v. 1. 289), angry, cruel.

flew'd (iv. 1. 124), having flews. *Flews* are the overhanging chaps of a deep-mouthed hound, e.g. bloodhound.

fond (ii. 1. 266, etc.), (1) tender; (2) foolish. In ii. 2. 88; iii. 2. 114, 317, both meanings appear to be in Shakespeare's mind.

gawd (i. 1. 33; iv. 1. 171), toy, trinket, jewel; from Lat. *gaudere*, to be glad.

gleek (iii. 1. 150), gibe, chaff; originally it appears to have meant trick, beguile.

gossip (ii. 1. 47), originally a god-mother, one who is *sib* or related in God; and then a talkative person. So too the verb in ii. 1. 125.

grain (i. 2. 97), the red dye of the kermes or coccus insect, called from its appearance *granum* or seed. This was a particularly lasting dye, and so *in grain* came to mean durable, permanent. Thus Olivia of her complexion in *Twelfth Night*, i. 5. 254: " 'T is in grain, sir, 't will endure wind and weather." In the present passage we have the primary sense, "purple in grain" = dyed purple with kermes.

griffin (ii. 1. 232), a fabulous monster, described by Sir John Mandeville as having the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion. The name comes through the Lat. *grýphus*, from the Gr. γρύψ, a creature with a hooked beak.

harbinger (iii. 2. 380), fore-runner; M.E. *herbergeour*, O.Fr. *herbegere*, one who provided lodgings for a man of rank.

henchman (ii. 1. 121), a personal attendant or page; perhaps derived from A.S. *hengst* + *man*, horse man. The henchmen were a regular part of the English royal household from the time of Henry IV until 1565, when they were abolished by Queen Elizabeth.

hight (v. 1. 140), is called. The only English verb with a passive sense. It is used by Shakespeare only in burlesque.

interlude (i. 2. 6; v. 1. 156), originally an entertainment or *ludus*, between (Lat. *inter*) the

course of a banquet or the stages of a festival; and so a dramatic moral or comedy, since these were often played on such occasions. Here, for instance, *The Interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe* is played "between our after-supper and bed-time" (v. 1. 34).

Jill (iii. 2. 461), a shortened form of Gillian, sweetheart.

jole (iii. 2. 338), jowl or jaw.

juvenal (iii. 1. 97), youth; an affected term, ridiculed by Shakespeare here and in *Love's Labour's Lost*, i. 2. 12-16:

Moth. Why tender juvenal? why tender juvenal?

Armado. I spoke it, tender juvenal, as a congruent epitheton appertaining to thy young days, which we may nominate tender.

Shakespeare seems to connect the word with *juvenis*, but Greene and Meres apply it to Nash in the sense of satirist, from the Roman poet so named.

lakin (iii. 1. 14). In the phrase *by 'r lakin*, a corruption of *ladi-kin* or little lady, the Virgin Mary.

latch (iii. 2. 36), moisten; or perhaps from another *latch*, meaning to fasten; e.g. in *Macbeth*, iv. 3. 195:

But I have words
That would be howl'd out in the desert air,
Where hearing should not latch them.

leviathan (ii. 1. 174), a whale.

lob (ii. 1. 16), clown, lout; connected with lubber.

lode-star (i. 1. 183), the pole-star, which leads, guides.

margent (ii. 1. 85), margin.

marry (i. 2. 11), an exclamation denoting indignation, scorn, or vehement assertion; originally an invocation of the Virgin Mary, of whose name it is a corruption.

- mew'd** (i. 1. 71), caged up. The subst. **mew** = (1) the moulting of a hawk's feathers, from Lat. *mutare*, to change; (2) the cage in which this process took place.
- minimus** (iii. 2. 329), smallest of size. It is the Lat. superlative, very small. Milton uses an Anglicized form in *Paradise Lost*, vii. 482: "minims of nature."
- misgraffed** (i. 1. 137), ill-grafted; but *graff* is a more correct form of the verb than *graft*. It is from the O. Fr. *graffe*, a slip.
- misprised** (iii. 2. 74), mistaken; from the O. Fr. *mesprendre* = Lat. *minus* + *prehendere*, to take amiss. So too *misprison* (iii. 2. 90).
- momentary** (i. 1. 143), momentary; from Lat. *momentaneus*.
- mural** (v. 1. 208), an affected term for wall.
- murrion** (ii. 1. 97), pestilence; the L.L. *morina*, from *mori*, to die.
- musk-rose** (ii. 1. 252; ii. 2. 3; iv. 1. 3), a large single rose, the *Rosa moschata*. Cf. note on ii. 1. 252.
- neaf** (iv. 1. 18) obsolete form of *nieve*, fist; of Scand. origin, the Icel. *hnefi*; connected with Gr. *κράμπτειν*, to crook, and therefore meaning lit. closed hand. Cf. *Henry IV*, ii. 4. 200: "Sweet knight, I kiss thy neif."
- neeze** (ii. 1. 56), a variant form of *sneeze*, just as we have both *lightly* and slightly, *quinsy* and *squintancy*.
- nole** (iii. 2. 17), head; probably a form of *noddle*.
- oes** (iii. 2. 188), spangles, circles like the letter O. Cf. note *ad loc.*
- orange-tawny** (i. 2. 96; iii. 1. 129), dark-yellow: *tawny*, Fr. *tanné*, tanned.
- ounce** (ii. 2. 30), a species of panther, used for hunting deer.
- pard** (ii. 2. 31), leopard.
- parlous** (iii. 1. 14), a corrupt pronunciation of *perilous*. Cf. Appendix H, § 15.
- passing** (ii. 1. 20), extremely; used, like *exceeding*, as a superlative.
- pat** (iii. 1. 2; v. 1. 188), exactly, precisely, to the point.
- patch** (iii. 2. 9), clown, fool; from the patched or motley dress of the professional fool. Cf. *The Tempest*, iii. 2. 71: "What a pied ninny's this! thou scurvy patch;" or from the Ital. *pazzo*, connected with Lat. *fatuus*, foolish. The "patched fool" of iv. 1. 214 favors the first explanation.
- pelting** (ii. 1. 91), petty, insignificant; perhaps from *pelt*, rags or trash; and thus akin to *paltry*, from Germ. *palter*, rags. Cf. *Lear*, ii. 3. 18: "poor pelting villages," and *Richard II*, ii. 1. 60: "a tenement or pelting farm."
- point**, (1) (i. 2. 8; ii. 2. 119), the summit of perfection; (2) (v. 1. 118), a stop.
- quaint** (ii. 1. 99; ii. 2. 7), trim, neat; the French *cointe*. This sense is perhaps due to a misunderstanding of *cointe*, which is really the Lat. *cognitus*, well-known, but was taken for the Lat. *competis*, adorned.
- quern** (ii. 1. 36), hand-mill.
- quire** (ii. 1. 55), or choir; properly a company of singers, the Gr. *χορός*, and so, as here, a company of any kind.
- recreant** (iii. 2. 409), coward; lit. one who recants his faith. *Miscreant*, which originally meant *heretic*, came, by the same characteristic mediæval confusion of ideas, to signify *scoundrel*.

rere-mouse (ii. 2. 4), a bat; perhaps from the A.S. *hrére-mus*, from *hréran*, to agitate. The name would thus be equivalent to *flitter-mouse*.

roundel (ii. 2. 1), a dance in a round or circle.

scrip (i. 2. 3), a piece of writing; from Lat. *scribere*, to write.

shrewd, (1) (ii. 1. 33), mischievous; (2) (iii. 2. 323), shrewish. It means literally *curSED*, being the past part. of *schrewen*, to curse, and may therefore be used in a variety of bad senses. The modern half-complimentary sense of *sharp* is rare in Shakespeare.

spleen (i. 1. 146), a sudden impulse of passion, or sometimes of laughter. The passions were supposed to depend upon the condition of the spleen.

square (ii. 1. 30), quarrel. Cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, iii. 13. 41: "Mine honesty and I begin to square."

thrum (v. 1. 291), explained by Nares as "the tufted part beyond the tie, at the end of the warp, in weaving."

tuneable (i. 1. 184; iv. 1. 128), musical.

unheedy (i. 1. 237), heedless.

vaward (iv. 1. 109), morning or fore-part of the day. It is the same word as *vanward* and *vanguard*.

videlicet (v. 1. 330), that is to say; it is a Latin word, and = *videre*, to see, + *licet*, it is allowed.

villagery (ii. 1. 35), village folk.

waggish (i. 1. 240), mischievous.

wanton, (1) (ii. 1. 99), luxuriant.

Cf. *Richard II*, i. 3. 214:

"Four lagging winters and four wanton springs;" (2) (ii. 1. 63, 129), amorous, often with some imputation of loose behavior. The literal sense is *unrestrained*, from A.S. *wan*, a negative prefix, and *togen*, trained, educated.

waxen (ii. 1. 56), increase. The old plural termination *-en* was almost obsolete in Shakespeare's time; it survived occasionally in the form *been* or *bin* = *are*. Cf. *Pericles*, ii. prol. 28: "Wher when men been;" and Peele, *Arraignement of Paris*:

My love is fair, my love is gay,
As fresh as bin the flowers in May.

weeds (ii. 1. 256; ii. 2. 71), clothes; from A.S. *wæd*.

welkin (iii. 2. 356), sky; lit. clouds, from M.E. *welken*, A.S. *wolcnu*, plural of *wolcen*, a cloud.

wode (ii. 1. 192), mad, the A.S. *wód*.

wot (iii. 2. 422; iv. 1. 168), know; 1st sing. pres. of *wit*, the M.E. *witen*, A.S. *witan*.

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